

STARS AND STRIPES[®]

**Bush named
Time's Person
of the Year**

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**Harlem hoopsters
play it up with
Sasebo crowd**

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**Sing, dance, act, direct:
Kevin Spacey does it all
to make Bobby Darin film**

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TUESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2004

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MICHAEL O'NEILL
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50¢

Misawa wins \$500,000 as AF best-base finalist

Wing hopeful of taking top prize, additional half-million Page 3



San Diego Chargers tight end Antonio Gates (85) breaks away from fallen Cleveland Browns defender Earl Little (20) on his way to a 72-yard touchdown reception during the second quarter Sunday in Cleveland. The Chargers won 21-0.

Chargers cause brownout in Cleveland, clinch AFC West

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give Vikings victory** Page 26

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advantage in playoffs with
win over Cowboys** Page 27

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Scene on Sunday

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

States

Gay marriage controversy: Social Security Administration officials have begun to reject marriage documents from New Paltz, N.Y., that were issued after Feb. 27, when the village's mayor, Jason West, started performing wedding ceremonies for gay couples.

The policy is part of a document called "Evidence of Identity for an SSN Card," which dictates what documents can be used to obtain a Social Security Card. But the agency stopped recognizing marriage certificates in New Paltz for that purpose after the February date. The agency says the policy that the legality of the documents is "unresolved at the state level."

Eric Rudolph trial: A federal judge has ruled that investigators properly seized evidence from bombing suspect Eric Rudolph's trailer and shed in North Carolina, making it admissible at trial.

Rudolph's attorneys had argued that federal agents improperly seized items such as books, a sales receipt, \$1,600 in cash, two daggers, bayonets and pistols, which were not within the scope of the search warrants.

But prosecutors said Rudolph had abandoned his property to go into hiding in the North Carolina wilderness after he was linked to the 1998 bombing of a Birmingham, Ala., abortion clinic that killed an off-duty police officer and injured a nurse.

Pauline Gore funeral: Former Vice President Al Gore remembered his mother at her funeral Saturday as an inspiring role model for women who believed education was the "key to freedom in life."

"She wanted everyone to personally feel the enlightenment from knowledge that she had felt in her own life," Gore said of Pauline LaFon Gore, who died Wednesday at the age of 92.

More than 200 people attended the funeral at the United Methodist Church in Carthage, Tenn.

Maryland house fires: Racial animosity and revenge may have been motives in the fires that caused \$10 million in damage in Maryland's largest residential arson case, a

spokesman for federal investigators said Sunday.

Four white men have been charged with arson at the Hunters Brooke development, where fires on Dec. 6 destroyed 10 houses and damaged 16 others. No one was hurt.

On Saturday, officials arrested three Maryland residents: Patrick Stephen Walsh, 20, of Fort Washington; Jeremy Daniel Parady, 20, of Accokeek; and Michael McIntosh Everhart, 20, of Waldorf. They were to appear Monday before a U.S. magistrate judge in Greenbelt.

A fourth person, Aaron L. Speed, 21, who worked for a security company hired to guard the development, is being held until a hearing Tuesday.

Business

Anti-spamming lawsuit: A federal judge has awarded an Internet service provider more than \$1 billion in what is believed to be the largest judgment ever against spammers.

Robert Kramer, whose company provides e-mail service for about 5,000 subscribers in eastern Iowa, filed suit against 300 spammers after his inbound mail servers received up to 10 million spam e-mails a day in 2000, according to court documents.

U.S. District Judge Charles R. Wolfe filed default judgments Friday against three of the defendants under the Federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act and the Iowa Ongoing Criminal Conduct Act.

World

North Korea sanctions: Japan's foreign minister warned North Korea on Sunday to recognize that it is running out of time to halt its nuclear weapons programs before Tokyo and its allies decide to impose economic sanctions on the isolated communist state.

At a summit meeting in southern Japan Friday, Japan's prime minister promised South Korea's president that Tokyo would hold off imposing economic sanctions on North Korea for now. North Korea said last week it would treat sanctions as a "declaration of war."

But Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura said Pyongyang wasn't off the hook yet.

"North Korea needs to recognize that it

doesn't have much time left," Machimura said during a talk show aired by public broadcaster NHK, adding: "As for setting a specific date as the deadline, we're still considering whether to declare one."

Palestinian prisoners: Israel on Sunday approved the release of 170 Palestinian prisoners in a goodwill gesture toward Egypt and the new Palestinian leadership, officials said, but a Palestinian official dismissed the Israeli move as "cosmetic."

News of the prisoner release came hours after Israel ended a two-day military operation in the southern Gaza Strip, leaving dozens of Palestinian homes in rubble.

The prisoner release was part of a deal with Egypt this month that brought home an Israeli jailed by Cairo on espionage charges.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called Sunday's decision by a ministerial committee a "goodwill gesture" and spoke of "deep friendship" for Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Australia Embassy attacks: The Muslim militants accused of bombing Australia's Embassy in Indonesia stopped to pray at a mosque next to a government ministry movements before they carried out the attack, police revealed Sunday.

The disclosure came during a police reconstruction of the group's alleged movements ahead of the Sept. 9 blast, which killed 10 people, one of them apparently a suicide bomber, and injured more than 100.

It came days after foreign governments warned that Islamic militants were planning more attacks on Western targets in Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country.

War on terrorism

Gitmo tribunals: Two prisoners with alleged ties to the al-Qaida terrorist network appeared Saturday before a U.S. military review tribunal in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

One detainee, whose age was unknown, was accused of shooting an Afghan militiaman and two civilians in 2003, said Navy Lt. Gary Ross, a spokesman for the Combatant Status Review Tribunals. Afghan militiamen captured the detainee a year ago after a shootout and grenade battle, Ross said.

Regional and factional militias helped the United States rout the Taliban in late 2001. The militias are being disbanded under a U.N.-sponsored peace plan, and the United States and its allies are training a new Afghan army.

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Misawa in finals for AF's top base prize

Installation officials confident about winning \$1 million, 2005 excellence award

BY JENNIFER H. SVAN

Stars and Stripes

MISAWA AIR BASE, Japan — Misawa will vie against McConnell Air Force Base, Kansas, and RAF Lakenheath, England, for the 2005 Commander in Chief's Installation Excellence Award.

For the second consecutive year, Misawa is in the running to be named best in the Air Force. As a finalist, Misawa is guaranteed \$500,000 for quality-of-life improvements. It stands to get an additional \$500,000 if it takes top prize.

Last year, Beale Air Force Base in Yuba County, Calif., edged out Misawa and Aviano Air Base in Pordenone, Italy, for the 2004 award.

But base officials here say they believe the odds are in their favor this time.

Maj. Frank Dement, 35th Fighter Wing staff director, noted that Kadena Air Base was an Installation Excellence runner-up in 2001, then won in 2003.

"We've been through the process before and hosted the visit," Dement said.

The IE Air Force evaluation team, due at Misawa from Jan. 31 to Feb. 13, has new members this year, Dement said, "but we know how things go. That should hopefully give us a little bit of a jump start on planning and being able to tell our story. That's what it's all about."

The late President Reagan established the award in 1984 to recognize bases that best use funds for services, facilities and

quality-of-life initiatives, and to encourage commanders to adopt innovative ways to manage and operate their installations.

"It's an 'above and beyond' kind of thing," Dement said. "Improving efficiency and making things happen better, faster and cheaper."

Evaluators are to visit major tenants, the commissary and main exchange, and various squadrons, units and organizations on base. They're to talk with law enforcement officers, chaplains, civil engineers, military lawyers, housing officials and other personnel.

"We'll highlight how we work hand-in-hand with the Navy, Army, Marines" and Japan Air Self-Defense Force, Dement said. Base officials also plan to high-

light community relations and cooperation with Misawa city airport, which shares the flightline with the base.

The \$500,000 prize Misawa earned as a 2004 finalist was spent adding a climbing wall and skateboard park for the new Weasel's Den in Hangar 973, 10 new treadmills for the Potter Fitness Center, new flooring and bleachers at Lumney Youth Center, keyless entry for base lodging facilities and equipment to expand base cable television service from 23 channels to 58 channels by early 2005.

Winning at least that much again for quality-of-life initiatives is a big deal, Dement said, especially since "it's probably another belt-tightening year."

"In this isolated region that we are in, quality of life is so important," he said.

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PHOTOS BY GREG TYLER/Stars and Stripes

After winning a race against other kids attending the game, J.J. Sawyer, center, became the object of attention for the clowning Harlem Ambassadors basketball team at Sasebo Naval Base's Fleet Gym. The Ambassadors, led by Lade Majic (7), who tried to teach him to "walk cool" Saturday night.

Game's all fun with Ambassadors

Sasebo all-stars are good sports playing straight to Harlem team

BY GREG TYLER

Stars and Stripes

SASEBO NAVAL BASE, Japan — Half of the players on the basketball court Saturday evening were all-stars — Sasebo's finest. But start to finish, the game was so much a joke that the 220 servicemembers, families and others at the Fleet Gym laughed almost non-stop.

That was the point: The local all-stars' "competition" was the Harlem Ambassadors, the comedy basketball team heir to the Harlem Globetrotters.

The all-stars found themselves getting trounced 83-43. More to the point, perhaps, they found themselves serving more as props than competition for the Ambassadors' brand of hoop high jinks.

The Sasebo appearance was part of the Ambassadors' "Around the World Tour," which has carried the team to 39 states and 19 other nations. While in Japan, they played in Sasebo after dates at Misawa Air Base and Yokosuka Naval Base, and were to play at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, on Sunday.

Despite the team's emphasis on antics, said Lt. Ralph Roe, the players' athleticism is impressive.

"Did you see how easily they moved up and down the court? It was almost effortless," said Roe, who regularly officiates games between base teams.



Lade Majic pulled David Freeman from the stands at Saturday's game and introduced him as her father.

"Our guys can do that for short periods of time sometimes, but these guys just did it continually."

Eric Raby of Sasebo's Security Department played on the local all-star team. He said the scoring wasn't important, even though the local team got wallowed.

"It's all scripted action and we don't even really cover them defensively. It's all for fun," Raby said. "It's all for the kids and for everybody to have [a] good time."

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Sasebo community shares holiday spirit with local orphans

BY GREG TYLER

Stars and Stripes

SASEBO NAVAL BASE, Japan — About 80 children from an area children's home had a jolly good time Saturday visiting the base for a Christmas celebration in the Community and Education Center.

The main base and Harrio Housing Village Chapel communities donated presents for the children, from Omura Kodomo Children's Home, via the Angel Tree Program.

The presentation was as exciting as the presents for some of the children. Santa Claus and his wife, Mrs. Claus, distributed the colorfully wrapped gifts.

Command chaplain Cmdr. Harvey Ramard called the event very successful.

"As a pastor, I believe that it's important for Christians to support and minister to those in need in the community wherein they live and work, wherever that might be," the chaplain said.

"Reaching out to the children of our host country, particularly at Christmas, is something I believe the Lord would want us to do."

After a hearty meal, the group moved into the Main Base Chapel, where they heard a rendition of the Christmas story.



Santa and Mrs. Claus present gifts and candy Saturday to children from the Omura Kodomo Children's Home who visited the Community and Education Center at Sasebo Naval Base, Japan.

Last week, about 50 children from Seibo No Kishi Children's Home visited the Harrio Chapel for a similar holiday event.

"I like providing opportunities for interaction that build positive and lasting memories for everyone involved," Ramard said.

"I know that each of the local children we touch will remember this all their lives," he added, "and each sailor and family member who participated in the Angel Tree Program will, too."

E-mail Greg Tyler at: tylgrjp@stripes.osd.mil



Kelly Holmes-Smith, leaning in at left, and her sister Jennifer, behind her, serve lunch Saturday to children from the Omura Kodomo Children's Home who visited Sasebo Naval Base for a Christmas celebration.

PHOTOS BY GREG TYLER
Stars and Stripes

Car bombs kill at least 62 in Iraq

BY ABDUL HUSSEIN
AL-OBEDI

The Associated Press

NAJAF, Iraq — Car bombs exploded Sunday at a Najaf funeral procession and Karbala's main bus station, killing at least 62 people and wounding more than 120 in apparently coordinated attacks in Iraq's holiest Shiite cities. Dozens of gunmen raised a main street in downtown Baghdad, killing three Iraqi election workers in a vicious attack designed to disrupt next month's parliamentary ballot.

The deadly strikes highlighted the apparent ability of the insurgents to launch attacks almost at will, striking in the heart of Baghdad and in numerous other cities despite confident assessments by U.S. military commanders that they had regained the initiative after last month's campaign against militants in Fallujah.

The bombings in Najaf and Karbala, predominantly Shiite cities 45 miles from each other south of Baghdad, came just over an hour apart. The first was a suicide blast that ripped through minibuses at the entrance to Karbala's main bus station, followed by a car bomb in a central Najaf square crowded with people watching a funeral procession attended by the city police chief and provincial governor.

"There's no doubt that there's a strong link between these two incidents," said Jalal Eddin al-Sagheer, an official with the leading Shiite political party, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution.

"These operations aim at driving the Shiites away from the political process and toward acts of revenge to undermine the national unity," he added. "The whole issue has to do with elections."

Youssef Munim, an official at Najaf's al-Hakim Hospital, said 47 people were killed and 69 wounded. Two more dead and 21 other wounded were taken to the nearby al-Zahra Hospital, according to nurse Mohamad Abdul Raza.

The car bomb detonated in Najaf's central Maidan Square where a large crowd of people had gathered for the funeral procession of a tribal sheik — about 100 yards from where Gov. Adnan al-Zurfi and police chief Ghalib al-Jazairi were standing.

"A car bomb exploded near us," al-Zurfi said. "I saw about 10 people killed."

Al-Jazairi believed he and al-Zurfi were the targets of the attack, in which he said three blasts were heard at about 2:45 p.m.

Both men were unhurt. "As I and the governor were waiting for the funeral procession,"



A TV camera captured this image of the aftermath of a suicide car bombing outside Karbala's main bus station Sunday. The blast killed at least 13 people, according to hospital officials. An hour later, a car bomb shattered a central square in Najaf, killing at least 49 people.

sions three explosions occurred," al-Jazairi said. "We were targeted."

It was not immediately clear what the other explosions were from.

Residents were pulling bodies of the dead from damaged shops at the square, which is about 400 yards from the Imam Ali Shrine, the holiest Shiite site in Iraq.

The blast brought down a two-floor building on a main thoroughfare. Dozens of local

men clambered over the rubble, digging for survivors amid clouds of dust and white smoke. Parts of the facades of surrounding buildings were sheered off by the force of the blast, exposing the rooms inside.

In Baghdad, about 30 armed insurgents, hurling hand grenades and firing guns, ambushed a car carrying five election officials, executing three — during the morning rush-hour on central Haifa Street, the scene of repeated clashes between U.S. forces and insurgents.

Three officials of the non-governmental Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq were dragged from their car, which was later set alight. Two escaped unhurt.

Pistol-wielding gunmen — their faces uncovered — forced the officials to kneel in the middle of Haifa Street, while the traffic behind them on the thoroughfare braked to a halt and panicked drivers tried to reverse away from the ambush site. One of the officials was punched by the gunmen as he lay on the ground, before the militants shot all three at point-blank range.

The commission condemned the attack as a "terrorist ambush."

Paper details death

RALEIGH, N.C. — A National Guardian who pleaded guilty to killing a 17-year-old Iraqi soldier said he shot the young man after they had consensual sex in a guard tower, the News & Observer of Raleigh reported Saturday, citing court-martial records.

Pvt. Federico Daniel Merida, 21, pleaded guilty to murder without premeditation and other charges during a court-martial in Iraq in September.

Merida was sentenced Sept. 25 to 25 years in prison and reduced in rank and will be dishonorably discharged. He is being held at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, a Leavenworth spokeswoman said.

Merida, who was born in Veracruz, Mexico, has a wife and toddler son.

Soldier killed in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY — One U.S. soldier was killed and three injured in a traffic accident outside Kuwait City on Sunday, the U.S. military said in a statement.

The statement said the "hit and run" accident happened in the morning, and the injured soldiers were admitted to a civilian hospital.

The names of the soldiers were withheld pending notification of next of kin, the statement said.

GI loses custody fight

FORT WORTH, Texas — A North Texas soldier who will deploy to Iraq early next year is furious that he recently lost custody of his son because of his military obligations.

John Wertz must comply with a court order and deliver his 9-year-old son to his ex-wife three days after Christmas.

Wertz won primary custody of his son when his marriage to Lisa Roberts dissolved in 1998.

From The Associated Press

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Saturday, at least 1,304 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,021 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said.

The figures include three military civilians. The AP count is four higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 11:30 a.m. EST Friday.

The British military has reported 74 deaths; Italy, 19; Poland, 13; Spain, 11; Ukraine, nine; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary and Latvia one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,166 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 912 deaths resulting from

hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ No new deaths reported.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Franklin A. Sweager, 24, San Antonio; killed Thursday in Iraq's Anbar province; assigned to 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force, Marine Corps Base, Hawaii.

Father apologizes for torching Marines' van

The Associated Press

HIALEAH, Fla. — A man has apologized for setting fire to the van driven by a team of Marines who had come to his house to tell him his son was killed in Iraq.

"Thank God they opened their hearts to see me," Carlos Arredondo Calle told a private meeting with the Marines on Saturday at a Marine base in Hialeah, a Miami suburb.

Arredondo was celebrating his 44th birthday at his home in Hollywood on Aug. 25 and had his phone in his pocket, expecting a call from his son, Marine Lance Cpl. Alexander Arredondo.

But then three Marines, members of a Military Casualty Assistance Calls team, arrived to tell him his 20-year-old son had been killed in combat in Najaf, Iraq, during his second tour of duty in Iraq.

"I got very upset. I felt like it was a bad joke or bad dream," Arredondo said. "I was crying ... I was calling for Alex."

Arredondo grabbed a propane torch and a gasoline can from his garage, yelled at the Marines to

leave, smashed a window of their van with a hammer, poured gasoline in the vehicle and climbed inside.

As his mother tried to pull him out, he said, he accidentally turned on the torch.

The Marines put out the flames on his body. Jackson Memorial Hospital has given him an extended payment plan to pay his \$43,000 bill for burns that covered 26 percent of his body.

On Saturday, Arredondo and his wife, Melinda, met with Marine Maj. Scott Mack and the three Marines who went to his house. They discussed two scholarships in his son's name — one created by the Marines and the other by Blue Hills Regional Technical School in Canton, Mass., where the younger Arredondo graduated. As a personal penance, Arredondo has visited veterans in Boston hospitals.

After the hour-long meeting, everyone stepped outside, and Arredondo saluted and embraced the Marines.

"Whatever happened out there wasn't about them," he said afterward. "I wanted them to understand I am very, very sorry."

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Legal team reports Saddam in good spirits

BY JAMAL HALABY

The Associated Press

AMMAN, Jordan — From his prison cell, Saddam Hussein urged his compatriots to remain united against the U.S. occupation and warned that upcoming elections could divide the country, his lawyers said Sunday after the legal team's first meeting with the ousted Iraqi leader since his capture.

Iraqi lawyer Khalil al-Dulaimi met with Saddam on Thursday, his Jordan-based legal team said. The government has begun to push forward the process for trying Saddam and 11 of his top deputies.

"Our representative in Iraq told us that the president warned the people of Iraq

and the Arabs to beware of the American scheme aimed at splitting Iraq into sectarian and religious divisions and weakening the [Arab] nation," said Bushra Khalil, a Lebanese member of Saddam's defense team of 20 attorneys.

"The president sent recommendations to the Iraqi people to remain united and not fall in the trap of America's slogans," she said. "He said Kurds, Arabs, Shiites, Sunnis and Christians are all Iraqis who all have to stand united against the American plot."

Al-Dulaimi came to Jordan late Saturday to brief the legal team on the 4½-hour meeting with Saddam, according to lawyer Ziad al-Khasawneh.

Saddam's health is good and his morale

is high, al-Dulaimi told the rest of the legal team, according to al-Khasawneh, although he is kept in a 9-foot by 15-foot cell "which lacks any information medium or connection with the outside world."

Speaking at a news conference in the Jordanian capital, the attorneys said al-Dulaimi told them Saddam has not seen anyone except his guards and the Red Cross representatives who have visited him four times since his capture. Al-Dulaimi did not appear at the news conference.

Al-Dulaimi was taken to the meeting with Saddam in an armored vehicle with darkened windows and did not know where in Baghdad Saddam was being held, the attorneys said. He is believed to be

held near the Baghdad International Airport, west of the capital.

Sometimes, Saddam hears aircraft flying over his cell, al-Khasawneh said. He quoted the deposed leader as saying of the airplanes: "These are probably going to Fallujah. I live with their pain."

Al-Khasawneh said Saddam signed an affidavit officially appointing the lawyers as his defense team. The team had been appointed earlier by Saddam's wife, Sajida.

On Saturday, Ali Hassan al-Majid, the former general known as "Chemical Ali," who is accused of gassing thousands of Kurds in the 1980s, and Sultan Hashim Ahmad, Saddam's last defense minister, appeared at the first in a series of hearings held to gather evidence for eventual trials.

Cuba wraps up exercise preparing for potential U.S. attack

BY VANESSA ARRINGTON

The Associated Press

HAVANA, Cuba — Cubans awoke to air raid sirens Sunday and practiced shooting, putting on gas masks and doing duck-and-cover drills as the communist nation wrapped up a week

of defense exercises to prepare for a potential attack by the United States.

The activities, called the Strategic Bastion 2004 Exercise, were aimed at evaluating how prepared Cuba is to confront possible U.S. military action during a second term by President Bush.

State-run newspapers reported Sunday that the exercises were a success, and that Cuba's "capacity to resist and overcome an imperialist aggression" was demonstrated.

Since even before the United States launched its unilateral attack on Iraq last year, Cuban au-

thorities have insisted that a similar U.S. strike on their country is possible.

"The risks of a [U.S.] aggression are real," President Fidel Castro said Sunday on Cuban television, which showed him checking in with officials around the country, via teleconference, on

the status of operations.

American authorities have repeatedly rejected that idea, saying there are no plans to attack Cuba. Last week, the U.S. State Department said the large-scale exercises in Cuba were really to distract people from the hardships of their lives.



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Poll shows more Japanese viewing China unfavorably

The Yomiuri Shimbun (KRT)

TOKYO — The percentage of Japanese feeling affinity with China dropped 10.3 points from last year to 37.6 percent in the Cabinet Office's annual public opinion survey on diplomatic affairs released Saturday, marking the lowest figure since 1978, when a comparable survey began.

Those who said they did not feel a sense of affinity with China rose 10.2 points to 58.2 percent from last year.

The figures reflected the current sour state of relations between Japan and China caused by recent disputes, such as China's

development of nuclear gas fields in the East China Sea and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni Shrine.

The percentage of respondents feeling an affinity with South Korea rose 1.7 points from last year to 56.7 percent. The figure was the highest ever, apparently due to recent Japanese interest in television dramas and other cultural products from that country.

The government has conducted similar surveys every year since 1978.

This year's survey was conducted in October on 3,000 men and women aged 20 or older across the nation. Of these, 68.9 percent responded.



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Republican senators at odds over Rumsfeld

By GENARO C. ARMAS

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Acknowledging mistakes in Iraq by the Bush administration, leading Republicans expressed reluctance Sunday that the White House replace Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, who has lost the confidence of some GOP lawmakers over the conduct of the war.

The chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee said a change at the top of the Pentagon would be too disruptive, given the elections scheduled in Iraq for Jan. 30. Sen. John Warner, R-Va., also said the administration was addressing the mistakes that have occurred in the aftermath of the U.S.-led ouster of Iraqi President Sudan Hussein.

"We should not at this point in time entertain any idea of changing those responsibilities in the Pentagon," Warner told NBC's "Meet the Press."

Sen. Richard Lugar, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, added, "We really can't go through that ordeal" now of finding a successor. Rumsfeld "should be held accountable and he should stay in office," said Lugar, R-Ind.

But Sen. Chuck Hagel, a Vietnam veteran, said he had "no confidence" in Rumsfeld. Hagel, R-Neb., did not say that Rumsfeld should step down.



Rumsfeld

"I find it astounding... Things are worse than they've ever been" in Iraq, Hagel told CBS' "Face the Nation." Hagel said the decision to replace Rumsfeld was Bush's.

More than 1,300 American troops have died since the war began in March 2003. On Sunday, car bombs rocked Iraq's two holiest Shiite cities, killing at least 62 people and wounding more than 120. In Baghdad, the capital, dozens of gunmen killed three Iraqi employees of the organization running next month's elections.

U.S. troops in Kuwait have complained to Rumsfeld about long deployments and a lack of armored vehicles and other equipment.

Rumsfeld, who agreed to Bush's request earlier this month to remain in the Cabinet during the president's second term, won a vote of confidence from the White House on Sunday.

"Secretary Rumsfeld is doing a spectacular job," the president's chief of staff, Andrew Card, told ABC's "This Week."

While security remains a concern in Iraq, Card said the growing economy and the establishment of the educational and



Warner



Hagel

Lawmakers criticize secretary for machine-signed condolence letters

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Last week, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld announced he would personally sign condolence letters to the family members of U.S. troops killed in action rather than letting a machine affix his signature.

Republican and Democratic members of Congress criticized the embattled Pentagon chief on Sunday for not signing the letters himself all along.

"My goodness, that's the least that we could expect of the secretary of defense, is having some personal attention paid by him," said Sen. Chuck Hagel, R-Neb., nothing that President Bush signs such letters himself.

"If the president of the United States can find time to do that, why can't the Secretary of Defense?" Hagel, a Vietnam veteran, asked on CBS' "Face the Nation."

In a statement Friday, Rumsfeld announced the change in policy and said

more than 1,000 condolence letters had gone out to relatives of Americans killed in military action during the global fight against terrorism.

"While I have not individually signed each one, in the interest of ensuring expeditious contact with grieving family members, I have directed that in the future I sign each letter," Rumsfeld said in the statement.

The statement, which was reported Friday by Stars and Stripes, did not specifically refer to troops killed in Iraq, though family members of soldiers who died there told Stripes they were angry with Rumsfeld's apparent stamped signature. More than 1,300 American troops have died since the war began in March 2003.

Messages left with the Pentagon about the criticism from lawmakers were not immediately returned Sunday.

The signature flap was the latest in a stinging string of criticism in recent weeks of the defense secretary's handling of the war in Iraq.

electrical systems in the country were positive developments.

"There are no guarantees, but we'll work hard to provide security," for the elections, he said. "It'll be a wonderful success story."

Rumsfeld's performance has come under criticism even from congressional Republicans, including GOP Sens. Trent

Lott of Mississippi and John McCain of Arizona.

Lott said last week that Rumsfeld did not listen to uniformed officers and that Bush should make a change at the Pentagon in the next year or so.

But Warner said Bush should stay the course, especially with the Iraqi vote next month.

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Inauguration security to be tightest ever

BY CURT ANDERSON

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush will be sworn in next month for a second term amid the tightest security in inaugural history, with police planning to search every one of the tens of thousands of people expected to line the parade route.

Behind the scenes, thousands of specialized law enforcement and military personnel will stand ready to respond to any emergency.

Security planners say they

have seen no intelligence indicating terrorists will attempt to target the first inauguration since al-Qaida's attack against the United States on Sept. 11, 2001. But authorities are preparing for the worst, even as they strive for the most accessible an event as possible.

"We are aware we are at war," said Terrance W. Gainer, police chief at the Capitol, where the ceremony will be held. "The whole world will truly be watching. We have to be on guard."

The Jan. 20 inauguration is the

latest in a string of major events highly symbolic of U.S. democracy — the Democratic and Republican party conventions last summer and the election itself in November. Counterterrorism officials have warned since spring that al-Qaida operatives are interested in disrupting the democratic process.

To the millions watching the inauguration on television worldwide, the ceremony and parade will look much as it has in the past. But each person attending the swearing-in and parade will be subjected to a search by metal

detectors, security personnel or both. And there will be more Washington streets closed and more security fencing than ever to create a large buffer zone.

"We have it as well covered as it can possibly be," said Michael A. Mason, head of the FBI's Washington field office.

The inauguration is designated a National Special Security Event, giving the Secret Service the lead among about 40 federal agencies involved in security planning and execution. A joint command center has been set up in suburban Virginia to enable top officials at these agencies to make quick, coordinated decisions in the event of an attack, violent protest or other problem.

"We're going to work as a team," Secret Service spokesman Tom Mazur said.

The extra security measures include bomb-sniffing dogs, sophisticated sensors to detect chemical, radiological or biological material, and expanded use of police helicopters and military aircraft. Thousands of police officers from the Washington suburbs and other cities will arrive to help with traffic, crowd control and other duties.

More will be ready to respond behind the scenes. The FBI, for example, will have investigators, evidence technicians, hostage rescue teams, heavily armed SWAT personnel, hazardous materials experts and bomb technicians in place.

"Our whole focus is a smooth operation if something does happen," Mason said. "We will be able to bring quite a robust force."

The military will have a heightened security role. This inauguration is the first since creation of the Joint Force Headquarters-National Capital Region, set up after the Sept. 11 attacks to protect the Washington area. It includes all branches of the military.



Maj. Gen. Galen B. Jackman stands on a giant map during a preview of the parade route for President Bush's inauguration.

Preparing for worst

Important components of security preparations for President Bush's Jan. 20 inauguration:

■ Enhanced security checkpoints at ceremony and along parade route. Each spectator to undergo a search, go through a metal detector, or both.

■ More fencing and a wider buffer zone around parade route, with more streets closed.

■ Use of bomb-sniffing dogs, chemical, biological and radiological sensors, and heightened aerial surveillance.

■ About 40 agencies involved in security planning, led by Secret Service.

■ Up to 4,000 military personnel available to assist or react to emergencies.

■ Hundreds of specialized law enforcement personnel on standby, including FBI SWAT teams, evidence recovery technicians, bomb experts and hazardous material workers.

From The Associated Press

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Time names Bush 2004 Person of the Year

BY SAM DOLNICK

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — After winning re-election and "reshaping the rules of politics" to fit his 10-gallon-hat leadership style, President Bush for the second time was chosen as Time magazine's Person of the Year.

The magazine's editors tapped Bush "for sharpening the debate until the choices bled, for reframing reality to match his design, for gambling his fortunes — and ours — on his faith in the power of leadership."

Time's 2004 Person of the Year package, on newstands Monday, includes an Oval Office interview with Bush, an interview with his father, former President George H. W. Bush, and a profile of Bush's chief political adviser, Karl Rove.

In an interview with the magazine, Bush attributed his victory over Democratic candidate John Kerry to his foreign policy and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. "The election was about the use of American influence," Bush said.

Bush remains a polarizing figure in America and around the world, and that's part of the reason he earned the magazine's honor, said Managing Editor Jim Kelly.

"Many, many Americans deeply wish he had not won," Kelly said in a telephone interview. "And yet he did."

In the Time article, Bush said he relishes that some people dislike him.

"I think the natural instinct for most people in the political world is that they want people to like them," Bush said. "On the other hand, I think sometimes I take kind of a delight in who the critics are."

Poll: Judging the President Bushes

NEW YORK — President Bush won re-election, unlike his father, but lags behind the elder Bush in the public's view of several personal attributes, according to a Time poll.

The poll examined public views of President George W. Bush compared with his views of the first President George Bush.

■ **Honest and trustworthy:** The former president, by 37 percent to 19 percent.

■ **Understands the issues:** The former president, by 43 percent to 25 percent.

■ **Likable:** The former president, by 38 percent to 28 percent.

■ **Sticks to positions, even if unpopular:** The current president, by 56 percent to 16 percent.

The Time-SRBI poll of 1,009 adults was taken Dec. 13-14. It has a margin of sampling error of 3 percentage points.

From The Associated Press

Andrew Card: Probers knew many of Kerik's flaws

WASHINGTON — White House investigators knew many of the flaws that have surfaced since Bernard Kerik withdrew as the nominee to lead the Homeland Security Department, President Bush's chief of staff said Sunday.

"Many of the questions that have been raised in the media were well understood by the White House when they considered Bernie Kerik," Andrew Card said.

Kerik, 49, withdrew his name from consideration on Dec. 10 saying he had employed an illegal alien as a nanny and had failed to submit required Social Security payments.

Card said what a decision was made that the former New York City police commissioner's shortcomings should be overlooked to approve his nomination. "It was Bernie Kerik's decision not to go forward," Card said.

White House: FDA doing 'spectacular' job

WASHINGTON — The federal drug safety agency is doing a "spectacular job" of protecting the public, the White House chief of staff Andrew Card said Sunday. The assessment drew an immediate outcry from a Senate critic who charged that government oversight under the Bush administration has proved "a catastrophic failure."

The debate about the effectiveness of the Food and Drug Administration comes days after the agency began advising doctors to consider alternatives to Celebrex, the leading arthritis painkiller, for their patients. A study had shown that the Pfizer Inc. medication increased the risk of heart attack and strokes at high doses.

Pfizer said Friday it will leave Celebrex on the market, although the same problems led Merck & Co. in September to withdraw from the market its painkiller Vioxx, a Celebrex competitor.

Overhauling Social Security

WASHINGTON — Two of President Bush's top advisers refused on Sunday to rule out the possibility that wealthy people might have to pay more to help cover the cost of his move to partially privatize Social Security.

Neither Treasury Secretary John Snow nor Andrew Card, the White House chief of staff, would say whether Bush's ideas about overhauling the federal retirement program would include raising the limit on incomes subject to Social Security taxes.

People currently pay those taxes on income up to \$87,900. That level will climb to \$90,000 next year. One proposal to help compensate for the private accounts would raise or eliminate the tax cutoff, which would mean that wealthier people would pay more.

Paper: Evidence of cheating by Texas schools found

DALLAS — Dozens of Texas schools appear to have cheated on the state's redesigned academic achievement test, casting doubt on whether the accountability system can reliably measure how schools are performing, a newspaper found.

An analysis uncovered strong evidence of organized, educator-led cheating on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills at schools in Houston and Dallas, along with suspicious scores in hundreds of other schools, The Dallas Morning News reported.

Pair reportedly showed off baby cut from mom's womb

MELVERN, Kan. — A woman charged with killing an expectant mother and cutting the baby from her womb was showing the child off to people at a cafe and to her pastor hours before she was arrested, residents said Saturday.

Lisa M. Montgomery, 36, was charged Friday with kidnapping resulting in murder and was expected to appear in federal court Monday. The baby, whose mother had been eight months pregnant, was in good condition.

Hours before her arrest, Montgomery and her husband showed off a newborn girl at a restaurant, said Kathy Sage, owner of the Whistle Stop Cafe in Melvern, a small eastern Kansas town.

From The Associated Press

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FACES

Obama signs book deal worth \$1.9M

U.S. Sen.-elect Barack Obama, whose 1995 book jumped onto best-seller lists after his keynote address to the Democratic National Convention, has landed a three-book deal worth \$1.9 million.

Crown Publishing Group and Random House Children's Books, divisions of Random House Inc., announced Friday that Obama will write two books for adults and one for children.

He'll be paid an \$850,000 advance for each adult book and \$200,000 for the children's book, said Obama spokesman Robert Gibbs. Proceeds from the children's book, which Obama will work on with his wife, Michelle, and their two young daughters, will go to charity, Gibbs said.

The contract is contingent on the approval of the Senate Ethics Committee, he said.

Obama, 43, will become the sole black U.S. senator—and only the fifth in history—when he is sworn in next month.

Sheen, Richards expecting another child

Christmas has come early for Charlie Sheen and Denise Richards.

The couple are expecting their second child, due in June, *People* magazine reports. Their first, daughter Sam Sheen, was born in March.

"They are incredibly thrilled and I couldn't think of a better Christmas present for the both of them and for little Sam," the magazine quotes Richards' agent, Chuck James.

Richards, 33, and Sheen, 39, married in June 2002. The couple met while shooting the film "Good Advice" in 2000. They began dating after Richards did guest spots on Sheen's former TV series, "Spin City."



Richards and Sheen

Legal troubles continue for DMX

Rapper DMX was arrested for allegedly driving more than 100 mph on a highway in the suburbs of New York City, a week after he pleaded guilty to driving through an airport parking gate while on drugs.

The 33-year-old rapper, whose real name is Earl Simmons, was pulled over Wednesday evening on Interstate 684 after driving 104 mph in a 65 mph zone, police said.

Because his license had been suspended after the airport incident, Simmons was arrested on charges of third-degree aggravated unlicensed operation. State police said he was also charged with speeding and driving an unregistered vehicle.

Simmons was released on \$350 bail and ordered to appear in court Jan. 18 in North Castle, about 40 miles north of New York City.

His lawyer, Murray Richman, said he could not comment because he had not talked to the rapper.

Simmons was charged in June with smashing into a gate with his vehicle at Kennedy Airport after telling a parking lot attendant he was a federal agent. He later admitted to being on Valium at the time.

High-priced high rise for Murdoch

Rupert Murdoch, the billionaire CEO of News Corp., has offered to buy a three-story penthouse for \$44 million, which would be the highest price ever paid for a Manhattan apartment if the deal goes through.

Murdoch and his family must also be approved by the co-op board of the building, at 834 Fifth Avenue, The New York Times reported Friday, citing an unnamed source informed of the negotiations.

Howard Rubenstein, a spokesman for Murdoch, declined to comment to the Times.

The New York Post, which is owned by News Corp., reported last week that the apartment, the former home of Laurence S. Rockefeller, had been sold—but did not name the buyer.

The 20-room apartment spans the 14th, 15th and 16th floors of the building. It has 8,000 square feet of floor space and spacious terraces on each floor. The monthly maintenance fee is \$21,469.07.

Stories and photos from The Associated Press



By DAVID GERMAN
The Associated Press

TORONTO

Bobby Darin wanted it all and pretty much got it: Pop music stardom, success as a folk singer, a reputation as one of the great stage showmen, acclaim as a movie actor.

When it came to his Darin film biography "Beyond the Sea," Kevin Spacey also wanted it all and pretty much got it. Spacey starred, directed, co-wrote, sang and danced.

He's even going on tour with a 19-piece big band to promote the film, crooning tunes from Darin's eclectic repertoire, which includes "Splish-Splash," "Mack the Knife," "Dream Lover," "If I Were a Carpenter" and the movie's title track.

multitasking to that extent is a risk for any actor. For Spacey, the gamble is even greater, coming at a career downturn in which his big-screen bankability has waned.

Since winning his second Academy Award for 1999's "American Beauty," Spacey, 45, has starred in four straight studio flicks that proved to be critical and commercial duds—“Pay It Forward,” “K-PAX,” “The Shipping News” and “The Life of David Gale.”

“The studio films I’ve done, was an actor for hire, so the responsibility of being the storyteller wasn’t mine,” Spacey said in an interview at September’s Toronto International Film Festival, where “Beyond the Sea” premiered. “And in this case it is, so if this film works, it’s because of the vast talents of a great number of people, and if it doesn’t, there’s nobody to blame but me.”

Early reaction to the film has been lukewarm, though Spacey earned praise for his warm, energetic performance and spirited vocals.

Spacey had performed in musicals from his early teens into his 20s, but good singing roles had since eluded him. He said he chose to sing himself because he’s generally not a fan of lip-synched performances, and relying on his own voice allowed him to expand on the music without being tied to Darin’s original vocal tracks.

“This wasn’t about an actor’s ego, wanting to get my rocks off by singing in a movie. This was about trying to do something that would honor him as an entertainer,” Spacey said. “This is all about Bobby. It’s about trying to reintroduce people to his catalog and hoping that this film will ignite a kind of recognition of his body of work that’s just been denied too long.”

“Beyond the Sea” traces Darin’s cloistered childhood, when he was afflicted with rheumatic fever, through his varied recording and acting career, which culminated in an Academy Award nomination for his role in 1963’s “Captain Newman, M.D.”

A Darin devotee since his teens, Spacey dreamed of mak-

An unusual suspect

Kevin Spacey directs, acts, sings and swings in new Bobby Darin biopic

Kevin Spacey performs during the “Beyond the Sea” tour at Wilmet Theater in Los Angeles on Dec. 6.

AP

ing “Beyond the Sea” for 12 years. Studios were unwilling to finance a film about a comparatively forgotten singer who died in 1973 at 37 after open-heart surgery.

“Every door slammed in my face,” said Spacey, who eventually found overseas financing. “Politely, but every door slammed in my face.”

Darin’s family also had objections, first, to the film itself, second, to the thought that anyone’s voice but Darin’s would be used for the soundtrack. Spacey gradually won over Darin’s reluctant loved ones, including manager and pal Steve Blauner, played by John Goodman, and son Dodd from his marriage to teen idol Sandra Dee, played by Kate Bosworth.

The film also co-stars Brenda Blethyn as Darin’s mother, Caroline Aaron as his sister and Bob Hoskins as his brother-in-law.

Hoskins recalls his initial skepticism when he met with Spacey over dinner to discuss the film.

“He said, ‘I’m going to direct it, I’m going to act in it, and I’m going to sing the songs, and I’m doing the dancing.’ ‘Yeah, you are, you are,’” Hoskins said. “And he said, ‘Really, I am. Well, I thought, if anybody’s going to stick their neck out that far, I’m going with them.’”

Spacey has stuck his neck out before. After a successful early career on stage, Spacey broke into movies but found himself typecast as sleazes or outright monsters, including the serial killer of “Seven” and a motor-mouthed low-life in “The Usual Suspects,” for which he won the supporting-actor Oscar.

Consciously trying to reinvent himself, Spacey bulled his way to more varied roles with “L.A. Confidential,” “Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil,” “The Negotiator,” “L.A. Confidential” and “American Beauty,” for which he won the best-actor Oscar as an acerbically funny husband in a midlife crisis.

For the foreseeable future, though, Spacey plans to stick largely to the stage.

“I’m going to be a theater rat for a while,” Spacey said. “I’ll probably do less movies than plays for the next five, six, seven, eight years.”

Spacey took over this year as artistic director of London’s Old Vic theater and plans to star in two plays there in 2005: Dennis McIntyre’s “National Anthems” and “The Philadelphia Story,” the basis for the classic film comedy starring Katharine Hepburn, Cary Grant and James Stewart. Spacey will play Grant’s role as a conniving ex-husband.

Spacey shrugs off his artistic misfires, including his recent string of film flops, saying he wants to keep his career focus on the long haul.

“There were a lot of years when people were really crapping on Paul Simon. Whatever happened to Paul Simon? He used to be good,” Spacey said. “Then ‘Graceland’ came out, and everybody was in love with Paul Simon again.”

Expedition to search for Earhart's plane

BY STEPHEN MANNING

The Associated Press

At 17,000 feet beneath the surface, the temperature of ocean water is just above freezing, oxygen is sparse and currents are relatively calm.

In other words, ideal conditions for preserving an airplane that might have crashed into the depths nearly 70 years ago, according to marine explorer David Jourdan, who hopes to answer one of aviation's greatest mysteries: the fate of famed pilot Amelia Earhart.

Jourdan and his Maine-based company, Nauticos, plan to launch an expedition in the spring using sonar to sweep a 1,000-square-mile swath of ocean bottom west of tiny Howland Island in the Pacific Ocean.

It is the latest in a string of missions to learn what happened to Earhart when she, her navigator and their Lockheed Electra plane disappeared on a flight around the world.

"Things tend to last a time" in the deep ocean, Jourdan said. "My expectation is the plane will be largely, if not completely, intact."

That is, if the plane is even in the ocean.

There is a host of theories about

what befell Earhart and navigator Fred Noonan in 1937 as they made one of the final legs of their widely heralded flight.

Some have searched the sea, believing the plane ran out of gas.

Others think she survived a crash landing but died on a deserted island. Another theory is that she and Noonan were captured and executed here. The conspiracy-minded claim Earhart survived and lived out her life under an assumed name as a New Jersey housewife.



Noonan

This much is agreed on: Earhart and Noonan vanished July 2, 1937, as they approached an air strip on Howland Island, roughly midway between Australia and Hawaii. They had taken off from Papua New Guinea, just 7,000 miles short of their goal to make Earhart the first woman to fly around the world.

The Navy launched a weeks-long search of 250,000 square miles of ocean around Howland and a nearby chain of small islands. No trace was ever found of the plane.

The shortage of oxygen and the fairly still water in the area west of Howland means a metal airplane likely would not have completely corroded, Jourdan said.

Any human remains would have long vanished, but Jourdan hopes to find clues such as Earhart's compass, which may be completely corroded, Jourdan said.

Or perhaps even Earhart's leather jacket.

"That would be eerie," he said.



Margaret Flynn, of Hudson Mass., greets 2004 World Series MVP Manny Ramirez during a New England Collectors Show on Saturday in Marlborough, Mass. Flynn is one of a number of fans who paid prices starting at \$179 to see Ramirez sign photos, balls and bats.

AP

Collectors, fans and players cash in on Red Sox success

BY MICHAEL MELLO

The Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — The passion of Boston Red Sox fans is being tested like never before this holiday season. Everyone, it seems, is trying to cash in on the team's first World Series win in 86 years — including the players.

From pennants to T-shirts and limited edition Christmas tree ornaments to glittery jewelry, there's something in every price marking the team's memorable triumph.

But if you want an autograph from Manny Ramirez, Johnny Damon or any of the team's other stars, better have your checkbook handy or visit an ATM first.

Want sweet-swinging Manny to sign a ball or photo? This weekend, he was at sports collector shows in Providence and Marlborough, Mass., where promoters charged \$195 and \$179 respectively. Prices were even higher for autographs on bats, jerseys and other items signed by the series most valuable player.

You also might check out the Sox Spectacular in the Providence show, dubbed "The Sox Spectacular" by New Jersey-based promoter Reverse The Curse 2004.

Prices were \$175 on balls and photos and \$250 for so-called premium items — and that's after a \$20 fee just to get into the Rhode Island Convention Center.

"It is unbelievable, prior to the World Series, guys like Damon and Ortiz were reasonable, in the \$30 to \$40 range" for photos and balls, said Mike Riccio, a veteran Connecticut show promoter. "The prices have simply skyrocketed."

Aaron Granoff, a 12-year-old from Providence, arrived at the show seeking Doug Mirabeli's signature. He quickly changed his mind when he heard Ramirez was there, too — even if the slugger's asking price was more than seven times more than the backup catcher's.

"I want Manny, because he got the [World Series] MVP award," said Granoff.

Tom McDonough, a longtime collector who's run a popular collector's show in Rhode Island for 28 years, says the jump in prices starts with the players' appearance fees.

"The players are cashing in... then the promoters have to make a profit," McDonough said. "Winning [the championship] changed everything. These guys are going to go down in folklore."

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Japanese yen (Dec. 20)	102.00
South Korean won (Dec. 18)	1,032
Euro (Dec. 20)	\$1.9369
Dollar costs (Dec. 20)	0.7332
British pound (Dec. 20)	0.5199

Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3768
British pound	\$1.9384
Canadian dollar	0.7225
Denmark (Krone)	5.9877
Egypt (Pound)	\$1.3287/0.2521
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7804
Hungary (Forint)	165.98
Indonesia (Rupiah)	63.345
Ireland (Pound)	0.7884
Japan (Yen)	104.31
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.2947
Norway (Krone)	6.1851
Philippines (Peso)	56.21
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7487
Singapore (Dollar)	1.6448
South Korea (Won)	1,060.63
Switzerland (Franc)	0.7032
Thailand (Baht)	55.22
U.S. dollar	148.63/1.00

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at many banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japanese, South Korean, German, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For logistical currency exchange rates, i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany with your local currency, the banking facility, commercial rates are inter-convertible for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign dollars to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars to pound, and the euro, which is dollars to euro.)

PRECIOUS METALS

New York Merc ore	
Gold	\$441.69
Silver	\$66.76

INTEREST RATES

Prime rate	5.25
Discount rate	3.25
Federal funds market rate	3.25
3-month bill	2.20
Source: The Associated Press, Bank of America	

Cents and Sensibility

Money tip of the day

Computers for good will

CBS MarketWatch

NEW YORK — If a new computer is on your wish list this holiday, you might think about donating your old model to charity.

There are some guidelines to follow: Before you donate, assess the value of your computer. You can find the value by checking Internet auction Web sites or even computer manufacturer Web sites.

Deductions are valid only for gifts to a recognized charity, meaning it has IRS approval to register as a tax-exempt organization.

Before you donate, check out the charity at www.charitynavi.com.

You also might check out The Used Computer Mail at www.usedcomputer.com. The Web site lists charities that accept new or used computer equipment. It also provides recycling guidelines in case your computer is a real dinosaur — too old to go anywhere but the recycling bin.

Remember to erase all the files from your computer's hard drive before you donate. At best, others will laugh at the poetry and e-mails you saved. At worst, you could be a victim of identity theft.

Remember to so-called disk-cleaning software, which will clear your computer's hard drive.

Be sure to get a receipt for your donation from the charity. You'll need it to take the deduction come tax time.

Mysterious donations as good as gold for charity

BY JAN DENNIS

The Associated Press

PEORIA, Ill. — Salvation Army officials don't know who has been dropping gold coins into their holiday kettles over the past 20 years, but they hope the mysterious donations continue.

More than 300 gold coins have been collected since the early 1980s, with an average value of about \$200 each, said Cliff Marshall, spokesman for the charity in Chicago, where the tradition began.

Chicago bell-ringers have brought in 10 gold coins so far this year. They aren't the only ones.

In Kirksville, Mo., someone donated a gold coin that was minted 20 years before the Civil War, worth nearly \$1,000. A \$400 South African Krugerrand was dropped in a kettie in Bloomingdale, Ill., meaning 12 extra families will get a complete Christmas dinner.

But officials still don't know where the coins come from.

The mysterious tradition began in 1982, when someone slipped a gold coin into a kettie in the Chicago suburb of Crystal Lake. The donations have occurred ever since and have spread across Illinois and about a dozen other states.

The phantom donors almost always conceal the coins, usually folding dollar bills around them. The gold coins have been worth a total of about \$60,000.

Rich Draeger, spokesman for Salvation Army's Peoria division, said the timing of the donations suggest they might be an inside job. He said gold coins tend to show up when giving starts to lag, indicating it might be an attempt by the charity to generate extra publicity.

"It seems to be a benefactor who knows that it's going to mean a lot more than \$1,000 or \$400 coin — it's going to bring attention," Draeger said.

Marshall, for one, hopes the mystery is never solved. "It's more fun to speculate than to know for sure," he said.

TUESDAY EVENING / DECEMBER 21, 2004

MOVIES

• **SPORTS**

[illegible]

JAPAN TV

Afternoon
12:30 CSI: Crime Scene Investigation (12)
1:30 U.S. Movie (1986): Police Academy 3: Back in Training (2:00)(12)
5:50 News (6)

Evening
7:00 NHK News (1)
7:30 What I Like About You (3)
10:00 News (1)

Morning
6:15 World News
7:15 World News
8:15 World News
9:15 World News Hour
10:10 2004 Japanese Major Leaguers (1):
Hideki Matsui (r)

11:15 CNN News
Afternoon
12:15 CNN News
2:15 PBS NewsHour
3:15 CNN News
4:15 World News Hour
5:15 Asian News
Evening
6:15 CNN News
7:15 News Today: Asia
8:15 News Today: World
9:15 Economic News
10:10 2004 Japanese Major Leaguers (2):
Hideo Nomo
10:35 2004 Japanese Major Leaguers (3): To
mofuku Ohka
11:15 NFL: New England Patriots vs. Miami
Dolphins
2:15 Asian News
3:30 World Amazing Sports
4:15 Asian News
5:15 World News Hour

JAPAN TV-BS11

Morning
9:50 Aerobics
10:00 Classical Music: Russian Brass Concert

Afternoon
2:40 U.S. Movie (1959): Solomon and Sheba (2:25)
Evening
7:00 NHK News
1:30 Italian-British Movie (1999): Tea with the Old Ones (1:15)

WOWOW

Morning
7:30 Oswald #9
8:00 Hong Kong-U.S. Movie (2002): So Close (1:55)

Afternoon
12:00 TVEast

1:00 British-Australian-German Movie (2001): Charlotte Gray (2:10)
3:10 Spanish Movie (2001): Intacto (1:50)
Evening
6:00 Spanish Soccer Liga Espanola
9:00 TV Series: CSI: Crime Scene Investigation

10:00 U.S. Movie (1986): *Pretty in Pink* (1:40)
2:20 UEFA Euro 2004 Soccer: Italy vs. Bulgaria

Morning
6:00 Wake Up!
7:00 M Size Monday
8:00 Top Choice
10:00 Pure Music
11:00 All the Best of MTV 2004 #3-#4
Afternoon

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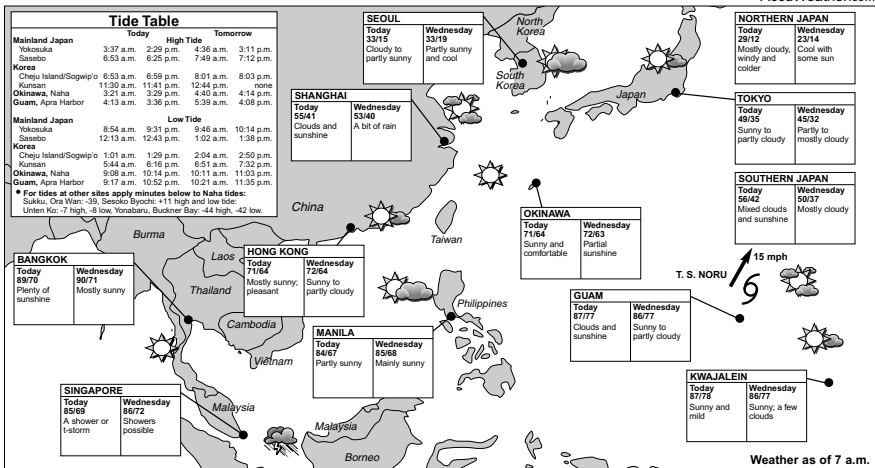
Australian-German Movie
 Grotte Gray (2:10)
 Movie (2001): Intacto (1:50)
 Soccer Liga Espanola
 CSI: Crime Scene Investigation

MTV

11:00 Criss: J
11:30 All the
Macy Gr
12:00 Top Cho
12:30 Consen
1:00 M Size T
2:00 Top Cho
2:30 Classic
3:00 After Ho

of MTV 2004 Punk'd #3 - #4
 of MTV 2004 Live Special #1
 Elliott, Snoop Dog, Fabolous
 E.R.D.
 Today
 Express Powered by Honda
 of MTV Live Special: Ashlee
 & Sky, Sweetnam
 Cass Edition
 st of MTV 2004 Live Special:
 e
 e: Orange Range
 Today

The Pacific Forecast

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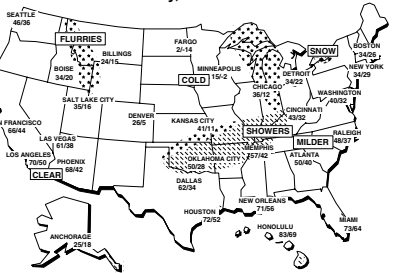
Extended Forecasts

TOKYO Thursday: Mostly sunny, high 72, low 32. Friday: Partly sunny, high 84, low 34.	KADENA Thursday: Partly sunny, high 72, low 63. Friday: Periods of clouds and sunshine, high 72, low 61.	SEOUL Thursday: Periods of clouds and sunshine, high 36, low 18. Friday: Partly sunny, high 34, low 16.	MANILA Thursday: Periods of clouds and sunshine, high 84, low 68. Friday: Clouds and sunshine, high 86, low 69.	HAGATNA Thursday: Periods of clouds and sunshine, high 86, low 76. Friday: Clouds and sunshine, high 86, low 76.
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Sunday's USA Temperatures

CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW
Albuquerque	54/30	Los Angeles	81/50
Amarillo	63/36	Little Rock	42/18
Anchorage	36/21	Louisville	31/10
Ashville	41/16	Miami	72/47
Baltimore	45/18	Milwaukee	14/9
Birmingham	45/18	Nashville	32/10
Bismarck	30/18	New York	44/21
Boise	44/28	Omaha	19/16
Boston	42/26	Orlando	65/36
Brownsville	74/48	Philadelphia	42/20
Buffalo	22/1	Phoenix	78/49
Burlington	49/14	Pittsburgh	33/6
Charleston, SC	61/20	Portland, OR	49/36
Charlotte	49/14	Portland, ME	42/23
Cleveland	22/7	Salt Lake City	42/29
Columbus, OH	24/6	St. Louis	22/10
Duluth	15/0	San Antonio	68/38
El Paso	58/31	San Diego	77/50
Hartford	40/21	San Juan	85/73
Helena	55/37	Tampa	66/36
Indianapolis	19/6	Tulsa	35/29
Jacksonville	64/24	Washington	42/20
Kansas City	27/17	Wichita	34/27

Tuesday, December 21



U.S. Extended Forecast

Frigid arctic air will cover the eastern half of the nation Monday. Temperatures in the single digits and teens will freeze the Northeast, Midwest and Ohio Valley. The Deep South will feel the chill as temperatures from Tennessee to Florida average 15 to 20 degrees below normal. A storm off the Northeast coast will bring snow to northern and coastal New England. Travel will be difficult across Maine, Massachusetts and Connecticut. Elsewhere, dry weather will prevail across the Southwest. A cold front will bring gusty winds and snow showers to the northern Plains. The arctic chill will remain over the East Tuesday. Snow will linger along the New England coast. A storm will bring snow to the Upper Midwest.

Tuesday's Pacific Temperatures

CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW
Bangkok	89/70	Iwakuni	54/38
Beijing	29/9	Kadena AB	71/64
Camp Casey	35/16	Kansai AB	40/24
Christchurch	62/43	Kinmen	87/78
Diego Garcia	84/66	Manila	84/67
Hagatna	77/77	Misawa AB	32/18
Hanoi	76/63	Osan	36/17
Hong Kong	81/64	Perth	85/61
Honolulu	83/69	Pusan	48/32

Tuesday's World Temperatures

CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW	CITY	HIGH/LOW
Acapulco	88/71	Budapest	31/21	Kabul	43/14	Nairobi	80/50
Aden	53/35	Buenos Aires	82/64	Kiev	22/13	New Delhi	76/44
Auckland	65/48	Cairo	66/46	Kuwait	68/42	Oslo	31/26
Baghdad	61/38	Cancun	78/66	London	39/33	Paris	30/26
Barbados	87/69	Cape Town	76/57	Madrid	42/31	Rio de Janeiro	80/67
Barcelona	41/29	Geneva	28/21	Mexico City	68/46	Rome	45/32
Berlin	30/25	Istanbul	47/39	Montreal	24/21	St. Petersburg	18/10
Bermuda	63/55	Jerusalem	57/41	Mogadishu	86/71	Stockholm	24/23
Brussels	32/26	Johannesburg	84/60	Moscow	22/9	Warsaw	26/19



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Soldiers' penalty unjustified

I am shocked and appalled at the actions taken by the battalion commander of the 6th Transportation Company concerning the six reservists who used parts from abandoned vehicles to complete their mission of delivering fuel ("6 G's court-martialed for taking vehicles in Kuwait," Dec. 15). What was this commander thinking? His men were ordered to do a job that it was to the mission and extremely dangerous in its itself. To send soldiers out into the desert loaded down with gasoline in ill-equipped vehicles is an act of an ill-equipped unit. Commanders should always be aware of their soldiers' needs, especially the condition of their vehicles. These vehicles are the key to completing any mission. If other soldiers abandoned vehicles because they were broken down or damaged in some kind of attack, then where is the crime in using abandoned parts to complete a mission that is critical to the war?

The article goes on to say that the troops should have returned the vehicles to their original units. Let me get this straight: While sitting in the desert with broken-down fuel trucks, the soldiers' responsibility was to switch missions to return an enemy unit's abandoned vehicles to the white sitting like a time bomb waiting to come under attack?

This story comes after Spc. Thomas Wilson, a Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld who more combat vehicles were not reinforced for battle. It's a shame in a fight of the Army that our soldiers are fighting a war where they must resort to scrounging scrap metal or "stealing" parts in order to reinforce a vehicle that ultimately might save their lives.

It makes me sick to my stomach to read about the Army charging these soldiers with theft, destruction of Army property and conspiracy to cover up their "crimes." And then to go on as if booting them out with dishonorable discharge and stripping them of all military benefits? In my opinion, sending troops out with ill-equipped vehicles is more of a crime.

Shana Harris
Naples, Italy

Army should honor contracts

I am glad the writer of the letter "Serving past your ETS" (Dec. 16) wants to carry out his family's military tradition and has served 15 years in the National Guard. However, there are some reservists and Guardsmen who actually signed an eight-year contract with every intention of serving just what we signed. Those individuals filing a lawsuit against the Army have every right to sue, since the Army is in breach of contract.

The writer has the audacity to bring in the seven Army values in response to our "griping" about getting sent to Iraq after we served out our contract. If we wanted to go active-duty we would have, but we chose to pursue a civilian education outside of the military life that, frankly, is not for everyone. Even though I have two loans, a scholarship and a work-study job, there was not enough for college bills, which is when the military came in.

Tell us what you think

Stars and Stripes welcomes your comments on editorials and columns that are published in the newspaper, and your letters on topics of importance in the lives of our readers. All letters must be signed, and must include the writer's address or base and telephone number. Please limit all letters to 300 words. We reserve the right to edit letters for length, taste and clarity.

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Get a job at Burger King? Have the writer do that and try to pay for college. Let me know how it goes.

Sgt. Meredith York

Logistics Support Area Anacanda, Iraq

Hunting serves a purpose

Thank you, Stars and Stripes, from all the personnel who will be unable to participate in this year's hunting seasons for the picture of the hunter on Dec. 4 (American Roundup).

Despite what the letter writer thinks ("Hunting purpose unnecessary," Dec. 14), there are a lot of soldiers, sailors and airmen who enjoy hunting. Although it is no longer a matter of survival to hunt, it is one of the privileges and rights that we still have.

It is quite apparent from the letter that the writer has not participated in this activity and is uninformed about the whole process. I suppose the writer would rather have untold thousands of game animals die the long, slow, agonizing death of starvation rather than have the chance for a quick, merciful death. That is what happens when there is no control of their populations.

Also, the letter writer should be aware that a large percentage of funds that are provided for wildlife management, to include wetlands replenishment, comes from these same terrible people who have a portfolio of every license sold goes to federal programs that benefit wildlife and provide funding to preserve wilderness areas.

Stars, please close the outdoors-type pictures — to include hunting and fishing — coming.

Dave (Dusty) Breisch

Würzburg, Germany

Hunting fights starvation

In response to "Hunting purpose unnecessary" (letter, Dec. 14): Hunting saves hundreds of deer each year from starving to death in the snow during the winter months. The deer population would grow overwhelmingly high without controlled deer

hunting. With a high deer population grows famine and disease.

For the letter writer: Perhaps further educating yourself on the benefits of hunting would have been best before ranting about Stars and Stripes and thousands of avid hunters.

Vanessa Rock

Hohenfels, Germany

Let women, not civilians, decide

I just read an article from The Washington Times from Dec. 9, Elaine Donnelly, who heads the Center for Military Readiness, is charging the Army with violating the ban on women in combat units. I don't understand why civilians are so concerned with this issue. I have never heard fellow combat-support females complain about being assigned to a combat-unit. This is something that those of us in the military understand can happen.

With the war on terrorism, there are no front lines. We have women who travel the roads every day just like every combat-arms counterparts. If we don't put women in the new "units of action," then what is the Army going to do with the thousands of women who proudly serve their country?

Please let those of us filling the jobs that take us into combat decide our future, not civilians who have never even put on the uniform.

Staff Sgt. Crystal Thompson

Forward Operating Base Danger, Iraq

Award shouldn't resemble CIB

Whatever is decided on awarding other military occupational specialties a badge or ribbon of some sort, it should not resemble in any way the Combat Infantryman Badge ("Alternative to Army badge," letter, Nov. 14).

Sure, the battlefield has changed and we find certain specialties close, in view or even in the battle, but the infantry is always "in" first, and always will be.

I being an 11B (infantryman), know they do take part in the action sometimes to support us. But we are always there to implement medical aid when our least combat medic is alongside another squad. We are alone to conduct our battles to the best of our ability; "man up" in the face of death, while we treat our wounded, conduct radio ops, breach the obstacles and search for roadside bombs and vehicle-borne bombs.

We like to keep ourselves separated from the rest of the Army because, well, we are. A combat patch is already given to any MOS who has been in a combat zone. If they want recognition as being in combat, first as an 11B should acknowledge it, then recommend it. Anyone who is brave enough to face an enemy machine gun and fires back, risking what the infantry does every day, deserves credit. But not give the Medal of Honor to every infantryman who is killed in action.

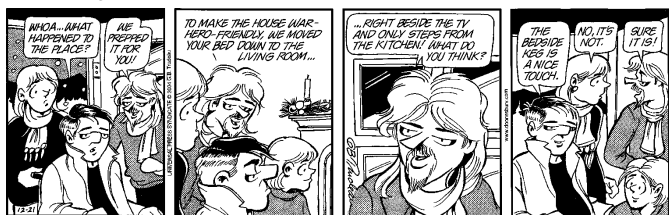
Whatever is decided for those who fired back during contact should not mimic the traditions and awards given to those who have endured the hardships and training of our most beloved soldier, the infantryman.

PC-Kevin Holt

Camp Hohenfels, Iraq

By GARRY TRUDEAU

Doodlesbury



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OPINION

Time is right for 'Chemical Ali' to face trial

Los Angeles Times

There are plenty of complications involved in trying Saddam Hussein and others from his regime for crimes committed against the Iraqi people, but none that argues for further delay. Interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi was right to announce that some of the war-crimes trials would start this week, including that of Ali Hassan al-Majid, known as "Chemical Ali," a cousin of Saddam's believed to have used poison gas to murder thousands of Kurds.

If the trials don't get under way, Saddam and his henchmen may never face justice. It's true that Allawi's every move in the run-up to the Jan. 30 elections is politically motivated, especially now that he has declared his own candidacy. But it could be a long wait before a democratic government with full legitimacy could initiate these proceedings, and the mostly Sunni defendants would still accuse the majority Shiites of unfairness. Indeed, the legal safeguards afforded the defendants, combined with the weight of the evidence, will determine whether these trials are deemed credible. For that reason, the government should televise the proceedings.

There is also a matter of basic fairness and due process. Keeping Saddam's lieu-

tenants indefinitely locked up without charging them is hardly the way to launch a new democracy, even if Washington has set a poor example at Guantanamo Bay.

It's almost unavoidable, as the Nuremberg war crimes trials showed, that these trials will be seen to some extent as "victor's justice."

In 1945, Chief Justice of the United States Harlan Fiske Stone called the prosecution being led by his colleague Robert Jackson a "high-grade lynching party."

It's a foregone conclusion that Saddam and his cohorts, like the Nazis, are guilty of heinous crimes. The accomplishment of Nuremberg was to shock and re-educate the German people by creating a documentary record of the Nazi regime's crimes and atrocities. In a traumatized Iraq, trials could have a similarly cathartic effect.

The real question is whether Iraq's judges are capable of carrying out the trials. The prosecutors need to work their way through mounds of documents and carefully prepare for belligerent defendants, especially the canny Saddam, who will attempt, as much as possible, to disrupt the proceedings and turn them into a circus.

The Bush administration, which has refused to acknowledge the jurisdiction of the permanent International Criminal Court in The Hague, has asked for the help



The war-crimes trial for Ali Hassan al-Majid, shown in Beirut, Lebanon, last year, began this week. Al-Majid, a member of Saddam Hussein's government, is known as "Chemical Ali."

of the United Nations in assisting prosecutors and judges. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has disgracefully refused to help, claiming that Iraq's death penalty prevents the United Nations from participating. But that hasn't prevented the United Nations from helping to carry out judicial reform in Rwanda and Afghanistan, which have the death penalty.

Those seeking to postpone justice can always point to some logistical or political reason for putting off these trials. But given their length — the main Nuremberg war crimes trial dragged on for more than a year, and former Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosevic continues to tie up the proceedings in his trial at The Hague — Alawi is right to want to get started.

Democracy in Afghanistan can be an example for Iraq

By DONALD RUMSFELD

"The ladies are coming to vote, as the future belongs to us — to us and our children." — Provincial elections official, Afghanistan, October 2004

Contrast that with this quote about women from a Taliban minister only a few years ago: "It's like having a flower, or a rose. You water it and keep it at home for yourself to look at. ... It is not supposed to be taken out of the house."

On Dec. 7, I attended the inauguration of the first democratically elected national leader in Afghanistan's history.

It is something we would have considered not just unlikely, or naive — but downright extraordinary not that long ago.

History has a way of overcoming expectations and conventional wisdom. In my lifetime, I have seen Germany become a genocidal and expansionist dictatorship and then a democratic ally of the United States within a span of a relatively few years. I have seen the Berlin Wall first rise and then fall — along with the totalitarian empire that built it.

Consider Afghanistan's October election, another such watershed moment in history. Just over three years ago, an extremist, barbaric regime ruled that country — a country that had suffered through decades of civil war, drought and Soviet occupation, and had no experience with democracy or individual rights. The Taliban kept women from exposing their ankles, forbade them from attending school, walking unaccompanied on city streets or seeing a male doctor. Kabul's soccer stadium was used not for soccer, but for public executions.

And as Americans know all too well, Afghanistan served as the base for al-Qaida's planning, training and operations. Osama

bin Laden was the Taliban's favored guest. Oct. 9, 2004, as a result of the brave and hard work of coalition forces and, most of all, the Afghan people, more than 8 million people were able to vote — some 40 percent of them women — in the first free elections in Afghanistan's history.

In addition, 3 million Afghan refugees have returned to their homeland since 2002 and it is estimated that the economy is growing at a rate of some 7 percent per year.

Thousands of brave young men have volunteered to serve in Afghanistan's multi-ethnic army, which is taking the fight to extremists and those terrorists who may still be harboring fantasies of returning to power and privilege.

And Kabul's soccer stadium is now used not for public behaviors, but for soccer.

None of this was considered possible, much less likely, by much if not most of so-called expert opinion three years ago.

The mantra is now familiar: Afghanistan could not pursue democracy because it was neglected and ignored by a Bush administration obsessed with Iraq, that the Taliban were making a comeback and al-Qaida was on the march; that democra-

cy and voting were irrevocably alien to the Afghan people and their culture.

In every instance, the critics were wrong. Afghans — including millions of women — braved threats and intimidation, traveled great distances, and waited in line for hours to cast ballots for their first democratically elected president. They will do so again next year when Afghanistan has its parliamentary elections — another important milestone, as well as a logistical and security challenge.

In Iraq, many of the widely popular negative sentiments are the same as we heard about Afghanistan, but so too is the potential for success. We are still less than two years from when Iraq was ruled by a murderous dictator who brutalized his country, looted its wealth and neglected its infrastructure.

No doubt the Iraq insurgency is more widespread, the casualties heavier, the obstacles seemingly more daunting. The reward for success — a free and peaceful Iraq — and the unthinkable consequences of failure are extraordinarily high, as the extremists well know. They have so much to lose.

Democratic elections in Iraq will deal a

similarly devastating blow to the terrorists seeking to take that country back to a dark place. And the impact will be felt not just in Iraq — wedged as it is between two dangerous regimes in the heart of the Middle East — but in that entire region.

So we should take stock — and take pride — in what has been accomplished in the global war on terror, but stay vigilant and clear-eyed about the challenges ahead in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere. And these challenges are real.

As in Afghanistan, success in Iraq will come from the perseverance of the free world, embodied by the valor and professionalism of the men and women in uniform, the coalition forces, and the new Iraqi security forces who are risking their lives every day, working with the newly liberated people to overcome intimidation and violence and to build a better life and future for themselves and their families.

In the last analyses, it will be up to the Iraqi people and I believe they have a good crack at making it. I say this because the great sweep of human history is for freedom. And that is on our side.

Donald Rumsfeld is secretary of defense.

Mallard Fillmore

By BRUCE TINSLEY



Free holiday sign

LA HOUMA — Some people wanted to know why "Season's Greetings" adorned the Terrebonne Parish Government Tower, instead of "Merry Christmas."

It turns out the decision had nothing to do with religion or political correctness.

The sign was free. Parish council members said that if someone donates a "Merry Christmas" sign, it will go up, also. The "Season's Greetings" sign was donated to the parish by the Terrebonne General Medical Center a few years ago.

Holiday lights Web cam

CO LAFAYETTE — After festooning his house with 17,000 Christmas lights, Alex Komarnitsky wanted more than just passers-by to enjoy the spectacle.

He got his holiday wish. His interactive Web site allowing Internet users to turn the lights on and off with the click of a mouse is attracting thousands.

Another Web site recently alerted users about his interactive page. "It said, 'This guy's Web site is funny. Turn the lights on and off and annoy the neighbors,'" Komarnitsky said.

This month alone, more than 1.3 million Internet browsers — including about 38,000 from a German domain — have visited the site.

Prison for abuser

MA NORTHAMPTON — A Huntington man was sentenced to serve nine to 10 years in prison after pleading guilty to breaking into his estranged wife's home and ambushing her when she returned from a court hearing that extended a restraining order against him.

Police said Donald G. Cornelius Jr., 47, hid in the basement until his wife came home from the courthouse, and then attacked her with a metal bar from an exercise machine.

Kimberly Anderson told the judge at the sentencing that when she is home alone, she still imagines the sound of his steps on the stairs.

Her nose was broken, she underwent several operations to repair her face, and she lost most of the hearing in one ear in the attack.

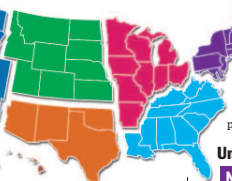
Drug test complaint

TX SAN ANTONIO — A fired drug screener was free on bond after he was accused of having sex with a woman in exchange for a false report that there were no signs of drugs in her urine.

Adrian Barrientos was released by U.S. Magistrate Judge Nancy Novak on a \$25,000 unsecured bond. Barrientos, 29, faces a charge of obstruction of justice, which carries a possible penalty of up to 10 years in federal prison.

Barrientos, formerly employed by a company that drug-tests convicted offenders, was accused by an FBI agent in a criminal complaint of misdeeds involving a female supervised offender who used cocaine this summer.

The complaint stated that Barrientos asked the woman if her urine would test positive. After she answered "yes," Barrientos told her



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

that he would falsely report on her drug-test form that her urine tested negative in exchange for sex, the complaint said.

Hefty donation

MN MINNEAPOLIS — A prosperous businessman didn't think he was entitled to his 2004 Social Security payments, so he became an early Santa Claus for the Salvation Army.

The man dropped a check for \$14,845 into a bell ringer's red kettle outside a bookstore in downtown Minneapolis.

The man, who declined to be identified, released a written statement through Salvation Army spokeswoman Annette Bauer, who had sought out the man for an explanation.

He said he will receive \$20,295 in Social Security payments in 2004 and didn't really need it because "I have considerable income now and should continue to have considerable income if I ever do retire."

Band to play for Bush

NV RENO — The McQueen High School band will finally get its chance to perform for President Bush. The Presidential Inaugural Committee chose the Reno school to represent Nevada in the Jan. 20 Inauguration Day parade in Washington.



It takes teamwork

Although the wind was a little calmer, it was still strong enough to make it difficult for Wilson Elementary School fifth-graders Brian Ladwig, Ryan Sager and Brian Jun as they take down the Wisconsin and American flags after school in Beaver Dam, Wis.

Two months ago, the band was barred from performing at a Reno campaign rally attended by Bush. A school district policy prohibits school-sponsored organizations from engaging in party politics.

Unpaid wages inquiry

NY ALBANY — Owners of a diner have agreed to pay \$76,000 to end an investigation into whether they failed to pay workers minimum wage and overtime in a case both sides expect will be repeated elsewhere in the state.

The Front Page Diner on Staten Island settled with state Attorney General Eliot J. Spitzer's investigation without admitting guilt, according to a Spitzer spokesman and the diner's attorney.

Spitzer accused the diner's owners of paying wages as low as \$2.25 an hour to wait staff between August 1999 and August 2004.

The minimum wage for restaurant workers accepting tips is \$3.30 an hour, while the minimum hourly wage for other workers is \$5.15.

Assistant attorneys general Michael Higgins and James Versocki also said the diner paid no overtime to cooks, busboys, and dishwashers despite work weeks up to 60 hours.

The diner's payroll process will be subject to monitoring and help in contacting workers and former workers to collect from the settlement, according to the agreement.

School shelves bonuses

CO GREELEY — The University of Northern Colorado shelved plans to award \$189,000 in bonuses to administrators next year after an angry backlash from faculty members who haven't gotten a merit raise in two years.

Faculty got a one-time payment equaling 2 percent of their salaries in June while nine administrators received \$103,000 in bonuses. UNC President Kay Norton suspended next year's bonus for administrators and promised a campus-wide discussion of compensation.

Slaying probe closed

AL BEAUREGARD — Prosecutors closed an investigation into a triple slaying by presenting to a grand jury circumstantial evidence found in a suicide note.

Bernard Vaughan, 69, shot himself two days after the March 26 shooting deaths of three men on his property. The note made reference to post-traumatic stress disorder, a result of his military service, and mentioned the "turmoil of the last 24 hours," Sheriff Jay Jones said.

Record farmland values

IA AMES — The value of Iowa farmland has hit an all-time high. An annual survey by Iowa State University shows that farmland values jumped 15.6 percent this year, hitting a record \$2,629.

That's an average increase of \$354 an acre. Scott County's average price was \$4,167 dollars an acre, the first time the average price of farmland in Iowa topped \$4,000.



Sweet holiday treat

A 1,150 pound polar bear at SeaWorld San Diego's Wild Arctic attraction links to a gingerbread man before devouring the tasty treat.



Blue reindeer

Bruce Aiken Elementary kindergarten student Mighuel Perez is not too excited to be singing Christmas carols at the Sunrise Mall in Brownsville, Texas.



Taking a break
A man relaxes in the warmth of the sun during the noon hour at a plaza in downtown Los Angeles. Last week temperatures hovered around the 80-degree mark under clear skies.



Balancing act
Dancers Jeffrey Kazin, foreground, Amber Sloan, left background, David Parker, center, and Emily Tschiffel pose from Parker's "Nut/Cracked" in a New York studio. Parker and his Bang Group performed the piece at the Dance Theater Workshop in New York.



Who goes there?
A young snowy owl perches on an insulator atop a power pole along near Somers, Mont.

Burglar facing hard time

NJ NEW BRUNSWICK — A burglar who broke into more than 100 homes in five counties and stole \$2 million to support his casino gambling habit faces a long prison term.

Samuel Krosky, 44, could get 25 years in prison when he's sentenced April 1. As part of a plea agreement with prosecutors, Krosky is required to make restitution to his victims.

'Predator' to stay in jail

VA PORTSMOUTH — A circuit judge ruled that Roy Young Jr., 32, who is serving a six-year sentence for molesting two girls, is a "sexually violent predator" and will remain in state custody even after his term is completed. A state law passed in 2003 allows sex offenders to be held if it is proved that they're likely to commit similar acts.

Union contracts OK'd

MI LANSING — The State Civil Service Commission approved pay contracts for unionized state workers and set pay levels for others not covered by union contracts. The agreements include pay increases of 10 percent spread over three years. As a concession to save the state money, most workers will receive 38 hours of pay for 40-hour work weeks from January until next November.

Waste ink dumping

CA SAN FRANCISCO — An Oakland newspaper publishing company and two men have been charged with crimes for allegedly dumping hundreds of gallons of waste ink in a vacant lot in San Francisco.

Alameda Publishing Corp., which publishes the San Francisco Post, the Richmond Post and the Berkeley Tri-City Post as well as the Spanish-language El Mundo, was charged with felony dumping violations that could result in millions of dollars in fines.

The company has already paid the \$9,000 to clean up the site.

The company's plant manager, Victor Martinez, 61, has been arrested along with William Araujo, 50. Both are charged with illegal transportation and disposal of hazardous waste and could be sentenced to three years in state prison if convicted.

Glass tower planned

DE WILMINGTON — A developer announced plans to build a \$65 million, 18-story glass office tower in Wilmington. The tower to be built by the Buccini-Pollin Group is the third speculative downtown office building to be announced this year. An office tower without a lead tenant hasn't been erected in downtown Wilmington for more than 10 years.

Permits for strippers

TX SAN ANTONIO — The City Council on Friday approved a measure that will require strippers to wear permits while they are on stage.

City Councilman Chip Haas pushed the amended human display ordinance as making it easier for police to identify dancers.

But a lawyer representing sever-

al strip clubs in the city said it would also create a physical danger by making it easier for an obsessed customer to find out a dancer's real name and where she lives. Attorney Jim Deegear has said he will file a lawsuit challenging the measure, which the 11-member council passed unanimously early Friday during a marathon meeting that began Thursday afternoon.

Deegear says the city's strict rules are part of an effort to drive his clients out of business.

Llama mistaken for deer

WI MADISON — A hunter faces two charges after shooting a llama that he mistook for a deer.

John M. Burger was charged with trespassing and a misdemeanor or count of mistreatment of an animal after he killed a llama named Snicker Doodle Silk that was grazing on land owned by Susan and Kevin Kovacs.

According to a criminal complaint, Burger was on land adjacent to the Kovacs' property when he shot the animal Nov. 9.

Burger told a Dane County sheriff's deputy he was in a tree stand when he spotted an animal grazing about 60 yards north.

Burger said he thought the animal was a deer, probably a doe, and he waited for it to raise its head. It did not and he shot at it. He then walked toward the animal and saw herds of llamas running around, realizing his mistake.

Burger reported the accidental shooting to the Kovacs family and apologized.

The trespassing charge carries a fine of up to \$1,000 and the other count carries a fine of up to \$10,000 and a nine-month jail term.

Internet while camping

TX AUSTIN — Campers at five state parks will soon be able to check e-mail or browse the Internet. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department announced a pilot program to offer high-speed wireless Internet service at Choke Canyon, Blanco, Balmorhea, Goose Island and Ray Roberts Lake state parks starting Jan. 1.

Security funding cut

TN MEMPHIS — U.S. Rep. Harold Ford has asked Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge in a letter why Memphis' homeland security funding has been cut from \$8.2 million to nothing.

Ford indicated that the threat of terror still exists in the city — a major distribution hub with one of the busiest cargo airports in the world. The cut will affect funding for first responders.

Mining project begins

NV BATTLE MOUNTAIN — Newmont Mining Corp. began construction on the controversial Phoenix gold mine site where copper and gold have been mined for almost 150 years.

The \$200 million project near Battle Mountain raised concerns over acid rock drainage and long-term effects on nearby water. A federal review found actions by Newmont will minimize environmental risks.

Stories and photos from wire services



Rays of light
The Creekmore Holiday Express rolls through the tunnel of lights in this long exposure at Creekmore Park's decoration of lights in Fort Smith, Ark.

Horoscope

Happy birthday to the sun! The passage of our solar daddo into the Tropic of Capricorn is one of the original reasons to party — ask any sophisticated caveman, Roman or ancient Egyptian. The days grow longer, the nights grow shorter, and we grow more aware that if we're to get that thing done before year's end, we'd better get busy.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY

(December 21). When you narrow your focus to one big goal, instead of being restricted, you feel your life broadening! Use what you're learning to up your income! Passionate encounters in the new year lead quickly to a commitment. Just be sure you're really ready! Friends have excellent tips in financial and romantic realms. Virgo and Pisces are love signs.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You've hoped, wished and prayed — now, it's ultimatum time. A certain situation in your life simply can't go on as it was. Take a stand, and all of the correct elements will align to support you.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You're fearless. Ferocious competition is out there, to be sure, but you're so convinced of your talent that nothing can stop you from winning. Tonight, you're in the mood to reconnect with friends you seldom call.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Your wild streak emerges to help you out in even the most sophisticated and structured environments. Release the constraints of artificial rules. Follow nature. Sagittarius helps in your pursuit of love.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Create more space in your life, and what you want might just drop into that opening. Peaceful environments help you come up with brilliant solutions or calm your nerves long enough to see the truth.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Instead of complaining, you just fix it. Doing so earns you high character marks

in the eyes of someone who is known to promote those with outstanding qualities. It's nice to be generally well liked.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22).

Obstacles can be overcome, not with force but with a different kind of strength. You're the sign of all things green. Think of the root that can crack concrete or the reeds that sway in the storm.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23).

Peace before being broke. You've got nothing to prove, so put down the wallet. Someone who wants to pay your way shouldn't be battled

you deserve it. Taurus and Scorpio are particularly attractive to you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21).

You see clearly what should be done, but the cooperation of many is required. Listen to friends. Do not, however, lend them money now unless you're sure you can afford to take a loss.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21).

You'll have spurts of energy and dramatic peaks of joy. The power of your personality carries influence. Don't be enticed by extravagant promises, but provides only a temporary high; find a permanent solution.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19).

You've got the chance to paint a certain picture of your life in the mind of someone new. Count your blessings, and de-emphasize what you do not have. Tonight's mood is exceptionally romantic.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18).

There's no problem that can't be solved before it occurs — prevention is your motto. From car trouble to holiday planning to dealing with the in-laws, an ounce of prevention is worth well over \$100.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20).

Your communication skills are superior. You could even pick up a few words in a new language. Seize the chance (or create your own opportunity) to make up for a wrong move in the past.

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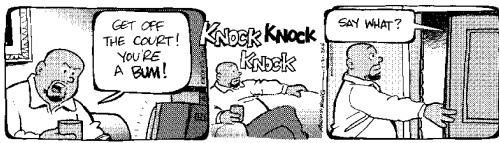
Holiday Mathis



Calvin and Hobbes



Jump Start



Zits



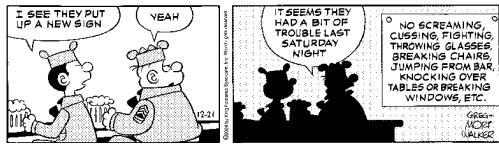
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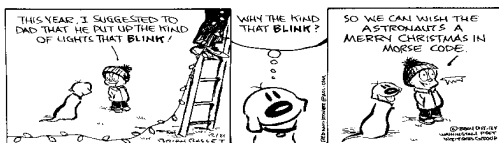
Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



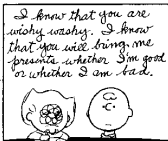
Red and Rover



Better or Worse



Peanuts



Brother should stand firm on loan

Dear Abby: I just read the letter from "Able but Unwilling in Alabama," whose mother and sister are urging him to "lend" money to his spendthrift brother. "Able" said he and his wife had always lived frugally and have brought diligently, while his brother and his wife lived far beyond their means. You responded that if "Able" was comfortable with his decision, he wouldn't have written to you.

He should stick to his guns. The brother and sister are siphoning money from here to eternity. Just like an alcoholic, if you give money to folks like that, they'll take and take until the money is gone. I know—I was one of those takers. I was never taught how to handle money.

—Hopingfully Doing Better in Florida

Dear Doing Better: I did get mail from readers who felt I should have encouraged the writer to stand firm. Read on:

Dear Abby



Dear Abby: It's time for that brother and his wife to grow up and learn to budget their own money. If "Able's" mother and sister aren't willing to put THEIR money where their mouths are, they should keep quiet. It never makes sense to loan money to a bottomless pit.

Strange, how "Able," the responsible son, is criticized, while the spendthrift, spoiled son runs to Mom and Sis to lay guilt and put pressure on the responsible brother. If the situation were reversed, would the big spender help his brother? I wonder? I don't think so. His selfish lifestyle should not be rewarded. The irresponsible brother should end the pity party and go to work!

—Hard-Working Mom in Providence, R.I.

Dear Hard-Working Mom: More readers agreed with you than with me.

Don't fret over ex visiting relatives

Dear Annie: Ten years ago, I went through a bitter divorce, and now I have minimal contact with my ex-wife. My ex used many tactics to prevent me from maintaining a healthy relationship with our two (now grown) children.

I recently learned that my ex-wife spent her vacation visiting with my family members who live 2,000 miles away. She stayed in my sister's home. It obviously was not a casual drop-in. My ex has no other friends or family living in that area.

I asked my sister why she was so willing to welcome this woman after all the years of grief she put me through. Sis told me the family had maintained some contact with my ex over the years and that they had a very nice visit. Apparently, Sis even invited the other family members over for a "reunion dinner." I am very hurt and betrayed by the lack of family allegiance, yet my family feels they did

Annie's Mailbox



nothing wrong. They think they are being magnanimous. I think they are being disloyal.

I have a new wife and a happy life now, but my ex still wears the divorce like a badge and won't let go of our past.

—Tired of the Games
Dear Tired: We can understand why this aggravates you, but if your family members

wish to maintain a relationship with your ex-wife, that is entirely their business. Instead of considering it "disloyal," think how much your children appreciate knowing their mother can enter their aunt's home without a fight. Your ex may have been a nightmare, but the kids are grown now, and it accomplishes nothing to insist your relatives avoid her.

Dear Annie: My husband and I have been married for six years and never had a problem until his friend "Ralph" came along.

Ralph is a nice guy, but he's a moocher. We play darts at our

Dear Abby: The brother made his choices and is reaping the "rewards." If "Able" baits him out, it won't be a one-time thing. It will open the door to keep the money flowing. There is a children's story about the Little Red Hen. The little hen asked for help to plow the garden, plant the seed and pull the weeds. The rest of the farm animals refused. However, when it came time to eat the bread, they all wanted some. Little Red Hen then said "no," because they had done nothing to help.

It's the same with saving money; we go without to build savings to cover our needs in leaner times.

—Brenda in Aurora, Colo.

Dear Brenda: That's a lesson many people need to learn. Too many are living on credit and accruing a mountain of debt while trying to keep up with the Joneses.

Letters for this column—with your name and address—should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 69410, Los Angeles CA 90069. Readers can write to Abby on the Internet at: <http://www.uxpress.com/dearabby>
Universal Press Syndicate

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

KNACS

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TOODU

OCHOLS

BLOTEG

Answer here:

Yesterday's Jumbles: GAUZE PUPPY SECOND MURMUR
Answer: What the family did to their home for the holidays — "SPRUCE" IT UP

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Argison



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

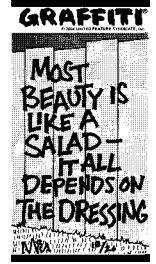
(Answers tomorrow)

Family Circus

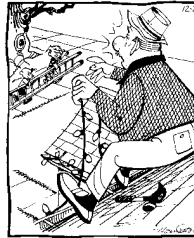


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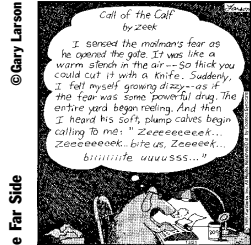
"Look at this one, Mommy! Baby Jesus in a nest!"



Dennis the Menace



© Gary Larson



The Far Side

Non Sequitur



*HEY, MR. WILSON! WE NEED TO BORROW YOUR LADDER FOR A WHILE!

Creative dog writing

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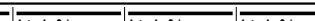
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Mets GM travels to Dominican, visits Sosa

BY ADAM RUBIN
New York Daily News

NEW YORK — Sammy Sosa renewed his vows with wife, Sonia, on Saturday in the Dominican Republic. Mets General Manager Omar Minaya attended the religious service, and appears to be renewing his efforts to obtain the slugger.

Privately, Mets insiders say their differences with the Cubs on finances were like "night and day" when talks stalled several weeks ago, and that with no other serious suitors and Sosa's recently diminished production, Chicago brass will need to cave in financially before any deal can be consummated. One team official said the Mets had "cooled" on Sosa.

Yet Minaya spoke at length during Thursday's news conference in Flushing to introduce Pedro Martinez about his ambition to make the Mets omnipresent in the Dominican Republic, the organization every prospect there dreams about. Adding Sosa certainly fits that goal.

Minaya also revealed that several players under contract to other teams have contacted him since Martinez committed to the Mets. It wouldn't be farfetched to presume Sosa was among them, given his desire to leave Chicago and his relationship with Minaya, which dates back to the 1980s with the Texas Rangers.

Minaya has been highly visible in the Dominican Republic since taking over as Mets GM. He participated in a news conference in Santo Domingo on Friday with Martinez and recently attended the dedication of a field honoring Alfonso Soriano in the eastern Dominican town of Quisqueya.

"It's on the radar," one source familiar with the discussions said about the Mets acquiring Sosa. "He's not staying down there to finalize a deal with Sosa. It's not any closer."



Though talks stalled several weeks ago, GM Omar Minaya's visit to the Dominican Republic indicates the New York Mets may be renewing their efforts to acquire Sammy Sosa, above.

Adam Katz, who represents Sosa, also was in the Dominican Republic for Saturday's ceremony and is believed to have held at least casual discussions with Minaya. The financial obstacles to a deal are on two fronts — with the Cubs and with Sosa.

Chicago, which desperately wants to unload Sosa after an end-of-the-season meltdown that included the slugger leaving Wrigley Field during the final game, owes him \$17.5 million in 2005, with an option for '06 of \$18 million that can be bought out for \$4.5 million.

If Sosa is traded, the contract automatically kicks in for '06, and a \$19 million option for '07 with the same buyout. There is also a \$15 million termination fee on top of the buyout.

The Cubs would need to eat the difference between Cliff Floyd and Sosa's contracts — including any buyout and termination fee — for the Mets to be interested. They may need to further sweeten the pot by including another player in the deal.

Sosa would need to waive the kicker in his contract that guarantees the 2006 money if he is dealt and replace it with a modestly priced contract for that year at roughly \$5 million to \$6 million. Floyd is midway through a four-year, \$26 million contract.

Sosa, 36, hit .253 with 35 homers and 80 RBIs in 478 at-bats for the Cubs.

Atletics trade LHP Mulder to Cards for three prospects

BY JANIE MCCAULEY
The Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Oakland Athletics traded their second top starter in three days, sending left-hander Mark Mulder to the National League champion St. Louis Cardinals on Saturday for a package of prospects.

Mulder follows Tim Lincecum out of town, leaving Barry Zito as the only remaining member of Oakland's vaunted "Big Three" pitchers.

Hudson was dealt to Atlanta on Thursday for three mostly unproven players.

Mulder could be the top-notch pitcher the Cardinals sorely lacked when they got swept by the Boston Red Sox in the World Series, but that's if he's healthy.

In return, the A's acquired pitchers Danny Haren and Kiko Calero and minor league catcher Darin Barton.

"We're extremely excited to have obtained a pitcher of Mark's caliber," Cardinals General Manager Walt Jocketty said. "He is the top of the rotation-type pitcher we've been working hard to obtain this offseason. It was difficult to part with the three players we traded but to acquire someone like Mulder we felt that this deal worked for us in several ways."

Mulder replaces Woody Williams, who was not offered salary arbitration by the Cardinals and signs a free-agent deal earlier this month with San Diego. Mulder will join Chris Carpenter, Jason Marquis, Jeff Suppan and Mike Myers in a rotation of at least five pitchers who met at least 15 games last season. Morris might not be available until May after going underoffseason shoulder surgery.



Mark Mulder was the second top starter to be traded by the Oakland Athletics in three days.

Mulder might have some health questions of his own, especially after his perplexing finish to last season.

The 6-foot-6, 165 lb. AL starter in the All-Star Game, seemed destined for Cy Young and consideration midway through the season, but went winless in his last seven starts — 0-4 with a 7.27 ERA.

On Aug. 24, he became the first 17-game winner in the majors, then didn't win again. There was speculation he was hurt and not telling anyone.

Mulder missed the end of the 2003 season with a stress fracture in his right leg near the hip, then pitched a team-high 225 1/3 innings in 2004.

He repeatedly claimed to be healthy despite a drop in his velocity late in the year. Manager Ken Macha said the day after the sea-

son Mulder probably did become worn down by his heavy work load.

Mulder (17-8) pitched so poorly during the playoff push, the A's briefly considered skipping his turn and using September callup Joe Blanton during the final week of the season in 2006. Mulder did get the call, but was knocked out after two innings, his shortest outing of the season — and the A's wound up missing the playoffs for the first time in five years.

He was drafted second overall by the A's in 1998 and was signed through the 2005 season with a club option to return in 2006.

After Hudson was swapped to the Braves, the news of Mulder's departure was even more shocking. At least in Hudson's case, there had been rumors swirling.

"What you've got to be kidding me," outfielder Eric Byrnes said of Mulder being traded. "Wow, I don't know what to tell you."

Haren, a 24-year-old right-hander, was 3-3 with a 4.50 ERA in 14 games, including five starts, in three stints with the Cardinals last season.

Calero went 3-1 with two saves and a 2.78 ERA in 14 relief appearances for St. Louis in 2004, allowing a 176-on-average batting average.

Barton was the Cardinals' first-round pick (26th overall) in 2003. He spent last season at Single-A Peoria, where he batted .313 with 13 home runs and 77 RBIs.

This was the first major league trade between the clubs since the A's dealt Mark McGwire to St. Louis on July 31, 1997, for T.J. Lincecum, pitcher Blake Stein and Eric Ludwick.

AP Sports Writer B. Falstrom contributed to this story.

Martinez gets really suite deal from Mets

BY RONALD BLUM
The Associated Press

Pedro Martinez got a really suite deal from the New York Mets.

The pitcher will receive a luxury suite at Shea Stadium for every home game and a hotel suite on all road trips, according to terms of his contract obtained Saturday by The Associated Press.

Martinez's \$53 million, four-year deal, which was finalized Wednesday, calls for him to get a \$3.5 million signing bonus that is payable through July 2007. He'll get salaries of \$10 million in 2005, \$14 million in 2006, \$14 million in 2007 and \$11.5 million in 2008.

New York gets to defer \$4 million of his salary in 2006 and 2007 and \$2 million of his salary in 2008, and will pay the money to him plus 5 percent compounded interest.

Martinez, already a three-time Cy Young Award winner, would get a \$500,000 bonus if he wins the award again this contract, \$1 million if he wins it a second time, \$1.5 million if he wins it a third time and \$2 million if he wins it a fourth time.

In addition, Martinez would receive \$50,000 for each All-Star appearance, \$100,000 for each Gold Glove, \$50,000 for winning the league championship series MVP award and \$250,000 for winning the World Series MVP award.

Dr. mayor Williams staking career on saving Washington baseball deal

BY BRETT ZONKGER
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Mayor Anthony A. Williams is staking his political career on whether his plan to bring Major League Baseball to the nation's capital is approved in the next two weeks.

Mays is elected to the city and not be "a mirror and just reflect what people are saying," Williams said on "Fox News Sunday" with Chris Wallace.

"Ten, 20 percent of the time you're elected to do what you think is in the best interests of the city," Williams said. "If people don't agree with that they can throw you out next time. And I think this is one of those issues."

The city's deal to transform the Montreal Expos into the Washington Nationals and build a \$460 million stadium along the Anacostia River waterfront has a Dec. 31 deadline with baseball owners. The District of Columbia Council



Williams

approved an alternate plan Tuesday that requires private funding for half the stadium construction costs, a provision baseball rejected as "wholly unacceptable."

Williams is planning to meet with Council Chairman Linda W. Cropp on Monday to try to sort out a compromise that could include private financing as well as guarantees for baseball. City officials are trying to arrange a meeting with baseball as well, he said.

"I actually am somewhat hopeful and optimistic that we can work something out," Williams said.

Williams defended his stadium

funding plan, saying it is "publicly one insofar as the city is involved in it, but it's really private, in that the largest businesses of the city have stood up voluntarily to give a special tax to help build the stadium."

Critics have said the deal for publicly financed bonds is one of the riskiest things they have ever seen for Major League Baseball.

Cropp said she is willing to call a special council session during the holidays to come up with an agreement, but baseball was not yet on the agenda Sunday for the final scheduled meeting of the year. On Dec. 21, said Mark Johnson, a spokesman for Cropp. The mayor and members of the D.C. Council were invited to participate in a town hall meeting on the issue Monday night, organized by a pro-baseball group. About 350 city residents were expected to attend, representing both sides of the issue, the group said.

Botched extra point attempt gives Vikings leg up on Lions

Minnesota eliminates Detroit from playoff contention

BY LARRY LAGE

The Associated Press

DETROIT — The Minnesota Vikings took a big step toward their first playoff berth in four years barely and with late help from the Detroit Lions.

The Lions botched an extra-point kick with 8 seconds left that would have tied the game, allowing Minnesota to seal a 28-27 victory Sunday.

The Lions went 80 yards in 1:29 to pull within a point on Joey Harrington's second touchdown pass to Roy Williams. Then Don Muhlbach's snap bounced to holder Nick Harris, who was tackled before he could get the ball spotted for kicker Jason Hanson.

Randy Moss recovered an on-side kick for the Vikings (8-6).

Despite losing five of their previous seven games, Minnesota can tie with the NFC North with a victory Friday at home over Green Bay and at Washington.

In the awful NFC, Minnesota could even be a wild-card team without another victory.

The Lions (5-9) officially fell out of the postseason race with their seventh loss in eight games, a heartbreaker they'll be thinking about for a long time.

Daunte Culpepper, who was 25-for-40 for 404 yards, threw three TD passes and Mo Williams scored the go-ahead TD on an 11-yard run with 1:37 left.

Nate Burleson, who had five receptions for 134 yards, caught a career-high two TDs. Moss and Culpepper hooked up for the longest play of their careers, an 82-yard TD, and Moss finished with four catches for 129 yards.

Moss caught his 88th TD, tying Hall of Famer Don Maynard for eighth on the NFL's career list, and had his 41st 100-yard game, and had his 41st 100-yard game, and had his 41st 100-yard game.

BY DOUG TUCKER

The Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Kansas City Chiefs looked like a playoff contender while the Denver Broncos stumbled around as a team hoping to get to 500.

Larry Johnson and Eddie Kennison each scored two touchdowns and Dante Hall returned the opening kickoff 97 yards for another score, giving the Chiefs a 45-17 victory Sunday over the fading, mistake-prone Broncos.

The Chiefs (6-8) scored on four of their first five possessions, aided on every drive by Denver mistakes.

It was the Chiefs' biggest margin of victory in the long series since a 31-point victory in 1983.

The Broncos' third loss in four games knocked them at least tem-

DETROIT Lions holder Nick Harris tries to pick up a bad snap on an extra point attempt against the Minnesota Vikings in the closing seconds of the fourth quarter in Detroit on Sunday. Lions wide receiver Roy Williams scored a TD with 1:12 left in the game and the extra point would have tied it. The Vikings went on to beat the Lions 28-27.

surpassing Cris Carter's team record.

Culpepper tied his career high of 33 TD passes, set in 2000, and is one shy of Randall Cunningham's team mark. All of his scoring passes Sunday were on third-down plays, including a third-and-24 on Moss' TD. The 82-yard play surpassed their previous best, a 78-yard connection four years ago.

Harrington was 25-for-44 for a career-high 361 yards and two TDs with two interceptions. Williams, in and out of the game with a hip injury, had seven receptions for 104 yards and scored for the first time in almost two months. Kevin Jones was held to 79 yards and a TD after running for more

than 150 yards the previous two games.

The poor snap at the end of the game followed a costly string of miscues for the Lions, who trailed 14-13 at halftime.

In the scoreless third quarter, Detroit had two turnovers — an interception at the Minnesota 3 and fumble at the 29 — and the Vikings had one in a span of six plays.

The Lions were moving early in the fourth quarter until Harrington lofted a pass into a crowd that was intercepted by Brian Williams at the 23.

Minnesota then went ahead 21-13 on Culpepper's short pass to Burleson, who outran Bruce Marion to the sideline and scored a 36-yard TD on a third-and-5.

porarily out of a tie with Baltimore for the second wild-card spot. Baltimore played their Sunday night.

Kansas City's third and sixth touchdowns came off interceptions thrown by Jay Plummer, who was fined \$5,000 last week for making an obscene gesture at a fan in Denver.

Plummer has eight interceptions and only one touchdown pass in his last three games. He was 23-for-41 for 292 yards, but was sacked six times and the Broncos (8-6) were flagged 10 times for 100 yards.

Typical of Denver's day was a fourth-quarter play when Tatum Bell took a screen pass and went 58 yards before Greg Welton punched the ball out of his hands at the 5. The ball went into the end zone and out of bounds, mak-

ing a touchdown and giving Kansas City possession on the 10.

Johnson, the second-year running back who spent most of the year in coach Dick Vermeil's doghouse, had 151 yards on 30 carries, including touchdown runs of 5 and 32 yards.

Finally getting a chance to showcase his skills, the first-round draft pick has gone over 100 yards in each of his last three games and scored five TDs.

Trent Green hit 16 of 19 passes for 224 yards and three touchdowns, including two touchdowns on 7 of 17 and 10 to Kennison, who beat star cornerback Champ Bailey each time.

Kennison's second TD capped a 10-play, 99-yard drive that included Denver penalties against Bailey for illegal use of hands and Al Wilson for roughing the passer.

NFL scoreboard

American Conference

East	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
x-New England	12	1	0	.923	365	217
N.Y. Jets	10	4	0	.714	297	205
Buffalo	8	6	0	.571	131	248
Miami	2	9	0	.154	213	289

South	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
x-Indianapolis	10	3	0	.769	454	257
Jacksonville	7	6	0	.538	228	228
Houston	6	6	0	.500	217	274
Tennessee	4	9	0	.308	249	303

North	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
x-Pittsburgh	11	0	0	.929	323	220
Baltimore	8	5	0	.615	270	275
Cincinnati	6	6	0	.500	213	240
Cleveland	3	11	0	.214	247	366

West	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
x-San Diego	11	0	0	.786	391	262
Denver	6	6	0	.500	213	274
Kansas City	6	6	0	.500	243	351
Oakland	9	0	0	.308	244	363

National Conference

East	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
x-Philadelphia	13	0	0	.929	369	217
N.Y. Giants	9	5	0	.643	303	260
Dallas	5	9	0	.357	256	367
Washington	2	9	0	.154	239	324

South	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
x-Atlanta	3	0	0	.786	301	283
Carolina	6	6	0	.500	300	298
Tampa Bay	5	6	0	.455	271	314
New Orleans	5	6	0	.455	285	328

North	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
Green Bay	8	5	0	.615	334	307
Minnesota	6	6	0	.500	376	340
Detroit	5	9	0	.357	258	313
Chicago	4	9	0	.308	241	361

West	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
Seattle	7	7	0	.500	319	319
St. Louis	6	6	0	.500	280	325
Arizona	4	9	0	.308	220	284
San Francisco	2	12	0	.143	245	390

Monday's games	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
Houston 24, Chicago 5						
N.Y. Jets 37, Seattle 17						
Buffalo 48, Denver 17						
Kansas City 33, Cincinnati 17						
Philadelphia 32, Dallas 7						
San Diego 21, Cleveland 9						
St. Louis at Arizona						
New Orleans at Tampa Bay						
Jacksonville at Green Bay						
Baltimore at Indianapolis						
Car-Minneapolis						
New England at Miami						
Green Bay at Minnesota						
Oakland at Kansas City						
Denver at Tennessee						

Sunday's games	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
Chicago at Detroit						
San Francisco at Indianapolis						
Baltimore at Pittsburgh						
Houston at Jacksonville						
Atlanta at New Orleans						
San Diego at Cincinnati						
Buffalo at San Francisco						
New England at N.Y. Jets						
Arizona at Seattle						
Washington at Dallas						
San Francisco at Tampa Bay						
Cleveland at Miami						
Philadelphia at St. Louis						

Saturday

Steelers 33, Giants 30

Pittsburgh	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
10	3	0	0	.923	311	211
14	0	10	0	.000	310	410

First Quarter	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
N.Y. Ponder 91, kicker return (Christie kick); 15.						
Pi-Alleges 10 pass from Randle II (Reed kick); 7:26.						
Pi-Alleges 2 pass from Manning (Christie kick); 4:02.						
Pi-RG Reed 21, 14.						

Second Quarter	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
Pi-RG Reed 21, 14.						
Pi-RG Reed 21, 14.						
Pi-RG Reed 21, 14.						
Pi-RG Reed 21, 14.						

Third Quarter	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
NY-RG Christie 22, 8:35.						
Pi-RG Reed 38, 4:15.						
NY-Rivers 1 pass from Manning (Christie kick); 2:29.						

Fourth Quarter	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
NY-RG Reed 28, 11:55.						
NY-Barber 1 run (pass failed); 8:15.						
Pi-RG Reed 1 run (Reed kick); 4:57.						
A-78:36.						

Final	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
First downs	27	17	18			
Total Net Yards	399	160	219			
Rushes-yards	39-160	29-196				
Passing	1-21	0-0				
Punt Returns	6-127	8-259				
Kickoff Returns	1-0	1-12				
Comp-Att-Int	10-29	16-21				
Sacked-Yards Lost	1-0	1-0				
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	3-3-0				
Penalties-Yards	24-1	5-55				
Time of Possession	36:59	26:41				

Individual Statistics	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
Running—Pittsburgh: Gardner 1 (minus 1), New York: Barber 16, Manning 2-18, Dwyer 1-12.						
Passing—Pittsburgh: 10-29-216, 11-21-180, New York: 1-0-0.						
Receiving—Pittsburgh: Ward 9-134, Lincecum 5-60, Hines 2-28, Miller 1-13, New York: Barber 5-38, Hillard 3-34, Shockey 1-13, Tomlin 2-54, Type 1-48, Finn 1-13, Rivers 1-1.						

Missed field goals—None.

Redskins 26, 49ers 16	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
Washington	7	1	0	.875	314	206
San Francisco	7	7	0	.500	277	314

First Quarter	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
Was—Royal 12 pass from Ramsey (Chandler kick); 5:14.						
SF—Lloyd 17 pass from Dorsey (Peterson kick); 4:50.						

Second Quarter	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
Was—RG Chandler 28, 8:28.						
SF—Peterson 20 pass from Dorsey (Peterson kick); 4:50.						
Was—Pierce 78 interception return (Chandler kick); 4:48.						

Third Quarter	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
Was—RG Chandler 28, 8:28.						
SF—Conway 11 pass from Dorsey (Peterson kick); 4:26.						
SF—Conway 11 pass from Dorsey (Peterson kick); 4:26.						

Fourth Quarter	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
First downs	17	12	15			
Total Net Yards	337	254				
Rushes-yards	40-128	18-155				
Passing	5-29	10-189				
Punt Returns	2-42	8-163				
Kickoff Returns	4-147	0-0				
Comp-Att-Int	10-27-0	15-1-7				
Sacked-Yards Lost	5-68	3-7-4				
Fumbles-Lost	1-1	1-0				
Penalties-Yards	10-75	10-75				
Time of Possession	36:59	23:01				

Individual Statistics	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
Rushing—Washington: Gardner 6-111, Coker 4-38, Coffey 2-31, Porter 2-20, Royal 1-12, Belts 1-31, San Francisco: Elton 7-113, Hicks 11-37, Barber 6-48, Dorsey 1-0.						
Passing—Washington: Ramsey 10-27-0, San Francisco: Dorsey 10-27-0.						
Receiving—Washington: Gardner 6-111, Coker 4-38, Coffey 2-31, Porter 2-20, Royal 1-12, Belts 1-31, San Francisco: Elton 7-113, Hicks 11-37, Barber 6-48, Dorsey 1-0.						

Missed field goals—None.	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
Calculus 34, Panthers 31 (OT)	10	0	0	.923	311	211
Atlanta	10	0	0	.923	311	211

First Quarter	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
Atl—Fineman 9 pass from Vick (Feely kick); 7:16.						
Cal—Munham 8 pass from DeHorne (Kasay kick); 7:23.						

Second Quarter	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
Atl—FG Feely 37, 14:11.						
Cal—Munham 8 pass from DeHorne (Kasay kick); 7:23.						
Atl—Dum 10 pass from Vick (Feely kick); 7:24.						

Third Quarter	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
Atl—Dum 10 pass from Vick (Feely kick); 7:24.						
Cal—Munham 8 pass from DeHorne (Kasay kick); 7:23.						
Atl—Dum 10 pass from Vick (Feely kick); 7:24.						

Fourth Quarter	W	L	T	Pct	PP	PA
Cal—Munham 8 pass from DeHorne (Kasay kick); 7:23.						
Atl—Dum 10 pass from Vick (Feely kick); 7:24.						
Cal—Munham 8 pass from DeHorne (Kasay kick); 7:23.						

Atlanta, Vick 11-28-134.
Receiving—Carolina, Muhammad 10-135
 Mangum 4-53, Goings 3-29, Proehl 2-40
 Seidman 2-29, Hoover 2-11, Colbert 1-43. **At-**
lanta, White 3-71, Crumpler 3-38, Finneras
 3-19, Jenkins 1-22, Price 1-4.
Missed field goal—Atlanta, Feely 45 (WL).

Calendar

Eagles secure home advantage for playoffs

The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — The road to the Super Bowl in the NFC again goes through Philadelphia.

Dorsey Levens' 2-yard touchdown run with 1:57 left helped the Eagles clinch home-field advantage throughout the playoffs with a 12-7 victory over the Dallas Cowboys on Sunday.

NFL roundup

But the win was costly for Philadelphia, which lost star wide receiver Terrell Owens to an ankle injury. Owens didn't return after spraining his right ankle early in the third quarter. X-rays on the ankle were negative, but Owens' status wasn't immediately known. Philadelphia plays its first playoff game on Jan. 15 or 16.

The Eagles (11-3) set a franchise record for regular-season victories. They've finished first in the conference three straight years, but couldn't take advantage of playing at home in the last two NFC championship games, losing to Tampa Bay and Carolina. The Eagles lost the NFC title game in St. Louis in 2002.

Danovan McNabb threw for 223 yards and one TD, but was intercepted twice. Brian Westbrook caught eight passes for 78 yards.

Vinny Testaverde also was intercepted twice, including a pass by Lito Sheppard on Dallas' final drive. Keyshawn Johnson had a TD catch for Dallas (5-9).

Jets 37, Seahawks 14: At East Rutherford, N.J., Chad Pennington and Curtis Martin had the New York Jets out of their recent scoring slump in a big way. Pennington threw three touchdown passes and Martin had 134 yards and two touchdowns of his own, helping the Jets

keep their lead in the AFC wild-card standings.

The Seahawks (7-7) had another disappointing day in their bid to stay atop the NFC West, with three turnovers the Jets (10-4) converted into 14 points. Shaun Alexander, who has a history of key fumbles, turned the ball over in the end zone early in the fourth quarter, effectively ending any chance to rally.

The Seahawks also were on the losing end of another call officials appeared to blow. Martin scored on a 3-yard run in the second quarter even though replays showed he never reached the goal line. Coach Mike Holmgren challenged the call, but referee Scott Green determined the TD should stand.

Bills 33, Bengals 17: At Cincinnati, Taskie Spikes returned an interception 62 yards for a pivotal touchdown against his former team, and Buffalo turned in another dominating defensive performance.

Buffalo (8-6) bolstered its playoff chances with a solid all-around game. Jason Peters blocked a punt and recovered in the end zone for a score, and the defense turned Jon Kitna's latest comeback into a bad flashback.

Kitna, filling in for the injured Carson Palmer, threw two interceptions and fumbled a snap, dooming the Bengals (6-8) to their 14th consecutive season without a winning record — one of the longest streaks of futility in NFL history.

Texans 24, Bears 5: Houston allowed the fewest points in its three-year history and got four turnovers to beat the bumbling Bears.

With the temperature 9 degrees at kickoff and the wind chill 1.0 below zero, it was the visiting Texans (6-8) who handled Soldier Field's frigid conditions better than



New York Jets running back Curtis Martin heads for a first down against the Seattle Seahawks during the first quarter Sunday.

the Bears.

Dave Carr threw a TD pass to Corey Bradford and also set up a field goal with a 69-yard toss to Jabar Gaffney. Domnick Davis scored on an 11-yard run in the fourth quarter and Charlie Anderson capped the victory by returning a fumble 60 yards for a TD with 2:37 left.

The Bears (5-9) failed to score a touchdown for the second straight game.

In Saturday's game:

Falcons 34, Panthers 31 (OT): In Atlanta, Michael Vick scored the tying touchdown on a 12-yard run with less than two minutes to go in regulation, then Jay Feely kicked a 38-yard field goal in overtime, helping Atlanta snap Carolina's five-game winning streak.

The Panthers (6-8) were as resilient as ever, recovering from a pair of double-digit deficits.

Carolina went ahead for the first time with a 21-point fourth quarter, only to have the Falcons (11-3) show they know a thing or two about bouncing back.

Charge: Gates ties NFL mark for TD catches

CHARGE, FROM BACK PAGE

"We're playing at a tremendous level and we want it to continue."

Tomlinson scored on a pair of 1-yard runs, his 15th and 16th TDs this season, and Gates tied a league single-season record for TD catches by a tight end with a 72-yarder in the second quarter.

The shutout was the Chargers' first since Nov. 29, 1993, 31-0 over Indianapolis.

The Browns and about 40,000 fans shivered through a home finale that was a microcosm of Cleveland's dismal season. The Browns did little on offense and gave up big plays on defense. Even when it caught a break, Cleveland couldn't capitalize.

After recovering a fumbled punt, the Browns had first-and-goal at the San Diego 5, but rookie quarterback Luke McCown was intercepted in the end zone on the next play.

"I want to say I'm sorry," said Browns interim coach Terry Robiskie, 0-3 since replacing Butch Davis. "This season turned ugly."

It took most of the first quarter for the Chargers to warm up. They caught a break on a questionable roughing-the-kicker call and Tomlinson scored on a plunge for a 7-0 lead.

Tomlinson has scored a TD in 11 straight games, two shy of the NFL record shared by John Riggins and George Rogers.

Gates, the former hoops star at nearby Kent State, made it 14-0 late in the first half. Left uncovered on first down, Gates caught a pass at about the 50, tipped down the sideline and ran untouched through the snow for the score.

"We worked on that play all week," said Gates, who tied Mike Ditka (1961), Jerry Smith (1967), Todd Christensen (1983) and Wesley Wells (1999) for the most TDs by a tight end in a season.

"This is one step," he said. "We want to go to the Super Bowl."

Redskins able to capitalize on 49ers' numerous mistakes

By GREG BEACHAM

The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Antonio Pierce found out just how easy it has become to beat the San Francisco 49ers: Simply stand in one place and allow their mistakes to find you.

The Washington linebacker got his first NFL touchdown on an interception thrown by Ken Dorsey, who hit Pierce between the numbers deep in Redskins territory with 48 seconds left in the first half.

Pierce returned it 78 yards for a score in a 26-16 victory on Saturday. Though the Redskins committed many of the same penalties, mistakes and lapses that have plagued their season, he realizes Washington's problems pale in comparison to the 49ers' woes.

"San Francisco, they're going to improve in the future, but we felt this was a game we should have, no excuses," said Pierce, who had the biggest of Washington's four interceptions. "It was 78 yards to the end zone? I knew there was a reason I was tired."

Patrick Ramsey passed for 214 yards and a touchdown, Clinton Portis rushed for 110 yards and Rod Gardner caught six passes for 111 yards — but the Redskins (5-9) were disappointed in their offense, which scored its only touchdown on the opening drive.

"We had an opportunity to lose that game if our defense didn't play so well," Ramsey said. "[The offense is] contributing more, but not as much as we would like. We've just got to get the ball in the end zone."

Washington also committed 11 penalties for 93 yards to stay on par with the franchise record. Without newcomer Jeff Chandler, who kicked four field goals, the Redskins' task would have been much tougher.

But when teams face San Francisco (2-12), they've got plenty of margin for all sorts of errors.

"The thing that I am proud of is just the way they fight," coach Joe Judge said. "The guys fight hard every week, and sometimes times are not that pretty. We just fought and played hard."

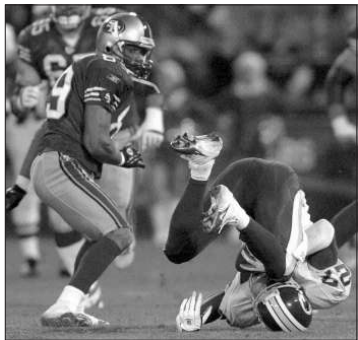
The Redskins took a 19-point lead late in the first half, and the steady defense shut out the Niners' offense for more than 45 minutes between Brandon Lloyd's early TD catch and Curtis Conway's scoring grab with 4:26 left.

Dorsey, making his first start in place of injured Tim Rattay, doubled his interception total for the season, including three in the first half. He finished 20-for-38 for 206 yards, but the 49ers remained on track for the top draft pick with more of the bland offense and step-slow defense that has defined their season.

"Defensively, time after time after time, we kept ourselves in the football game," 49ers coach Dennis Erickson said. "We just didn't make the plays we needed to, throwing the football."

With season-ending losses to Buffalo and New England, San Francisco could match the worst records in franchise history, set in 1978 and 1979.

Chandler, the former 49ers kicker signed by Washington earlier in the week, made a 49-yard field goal and three short kicks in



CONTRA COSTA TIMES/KRT

Washington Redskins Walt Harris comes up with a fourth quarter interception as intended 49ers receiver Curtis Conway watches.

an impressive debut.

"Two very costly decisions, that's how I sum up this game," Dorsey said, referring to two of his first-half interceptions. "At the end of the half, you've got to get at least three points out of

that. That's all things you've got to learn. The NFL make sure don't happen again."

Star linebacker LaVar Arrington returned to the Redskins' lineup after missing 11 weeks with a knee injury.

Raptors prevail in matchup of Carter's old new teams

Nets' deal for All-Star expected to be completed Monday

The Associated Press

TORONTO — Lamond Murray scored 12 of his 18 points in the fourth quarter and the Toronto Raptors beat the New Jersey Nets 110-99 on Sunday, their first victory of the post-Vince Carter era.

Carter wasn't at the Air Canada Centre because Toronto's trade with New Jersey isn't expected to be finalized until noon Monday.

The Raptors traded their biggest star on Friday to the Nets for Eric Williams, Aaron Williams, Alonzo Mourning and two first-round draft picks.

Eric and Aaron didn't play either, but sat in the stands behind the Raptors bench. Mourning might never play for Toronto.

Murray, who could play more minutes than Carter is now, recorded his highest scoring game with Toronto. He scored 12 points as the Raptors began the fourth quarter on a 7-4 run.

His three-pointer gave Toronto a 96-80 lead with 6:53 left. New Jersey got no closer than 11 thereafter.

Morris Peterson added 20 points for the Raptors, who lost Friday's game to Indiana — their first game without Carter.

Richard Jefferson had 38 points for the Nets, who don't know when Carter will be able to play. Carter underwent his physical on Saturday, and a Nets spokesman said the team is still analyzing it.

The five-time All-Star is on the injured list with a strained left Achilles' tendon.

Nicks 94, Jazz 93: At New York, Jamal Crawford scored 11 of his 24 points in the final five minutes, including a rare four-point play and a sweet crossover move that led to a key basket over the Knicks' victory over Utah.

Crawford was his usual erratic self, missing his first six shots before eventually finding his stroke. His running floater off a nifty move against Raja Bell made it 90-86 with 27 seconds left, and Stephen Marbury's two free throws with 6.4 remaining gave New York a four-point lead.

Marbury had 19 points and 12 assists, Michael Sweetney scored 13 and Kurt Thomas grabbed 14 of the Knicks' 29 rebounds as New York won at home over the Jazz for the first time in more than eight years.

Matt Harpring scored 21, Bell added 20 and Carlos Boozer 19 points for the Jazz, who won their seventh consecutive road game.

In Saturday's games:

76ers 116, Bucks 97: At Milwaukee, Allen Iverson scored a season-high 54 points, including 15 in the fourth quarter, and the Sixers won for the fourth time in five games.

It was the seventh time in Iverson's



NBA roundup
The Raptors traded their biggest star on Friday to the Nets for Eric Williams, Aaron Williams, Alonzo Mourning and two first-round draft picks.

son's nine-year career that he had scored at least 50 points in a regular-season game, and he has done it three times in the playoffs.

His career-high is 58 points against Houston in an overtime game on Jan. 15, 2002, after the 54 points tied his season-high scoring total in a regular-season game.

Iverson is the seventh active player and 93rd in NBA history to score 15,000 points. He scored 33 first-half points, making 12 of 17 shots and six of seven free throws.

Bobcats 101, Rockets 100: Bloodied in the final seconds of overtime, Emeka Okafor battled for a critical loose ball that helped expansion Charlotte secure its first winning streak.

Okafor also had 23 points and 17 rebounds, his 12th consecutive game in double figures in both categories.

Keith Bogans finished with 19 points, Gerald Wallace had 15, and Jamal Sampson had 11 rebounds for the Bobcats, who won their second straight game and fifth consecutive at the Charlotte Coliseum.

Tracy McGrady scored 29 for the Rockets.

Magic 117, Nuggets 95: At Orlando, Fla., Courtney Mobley scored 19 points to lead a balanced attack, and Orlando snapped a three-game losing streak by beating weary and wounded Denver.

Orlando shot a season-high 58.1 percent, had six players score in double figures, and tied its season best with 30 assists.

Trail Blazers 75, Pistons 74: Darius Miles made a free throw with 0.5 seconds remaining, lifting visiting Portland over Detroit.

Nick Van Exel led Portland with 14 points, and Miles added 13.

Rasheed Wallace had 17 points and 12 rebounds, while Chauncey



NBA roundup
The New York Nets' Nenad Krstic, right, tries to block Toronto's Donyell Marshall in Toronto on Sunday. The Raptors won 110-99.

Billups finished with 16. Richard Hamilton scored 11, but missed 19 of 22 shots.

Celtics 114, Cavaliers 107: At Cleveland, Paul Pierce scored 34 points and Gary Payton made a crucial three-point shot and three free throws to tie the final 1:17 to help Boston snap Cleveland's nine-game, home-winning streak.

Payton's three-pointer from the wing came 14 seconds after LeBron James fouled out, leaving the Cavaliers without their leading scorer when they needed him most.

Suns 110, Wizards 96: Shawn Marion had a season-high 36 points and 14 rebounds, and Quentin Richardson added 19 points for the host Suns.

Leading scorer Amaré Stoudemire got in foul trouble and had just eight points in 22 minutes for Phoenix, snapping his team-best streak of double-digit games at 53. But Steven Hunter filled in, tying his career high with 17 points.

Bulls 85, Pacers 71: At Chicago, Eddy Curry had season highs with 23 points and 13 rebounds, and Chicago earned its first three-game winning streak in two years.

The Bulls last had a three-game winning streak in December 2002, but haven't won four in a row since 1998 when their last championship team ran off 13 straight victories.

Spurs 104, Warriors 95: At San Antonio, Tony Parker and Manu Ginobili each scored 21 points, including 15 straight in the second quarter, in leading San Antonio over Golden State.

Tim Duncan added 12 points for the Spurs, who extended their winning streak to four games and beat the Warriors for the 15th straight time at home.

Jason Richardson led the Warriors with 22 points, 16 in the first half.

NBA scoreboards

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division			
	W	L	Pct
New York	11	13	.458
Boston	9	15	.375
Philadelphia	10	14	.417
Toronto	9	15	.375
New Jersey	10	14	.417

Southeast Division			
	W	L	Pct
Orlando	4	20	.167
Washington	4	20	.167
Charlotte	6	18	.250
Atlanta	4	20	.167
Cleveland	10	14	.417
Detroit	12	12	.500
Chicago	7	17	.292
Milwaukee	15	9	.619

Central Division			
	W	L	Pct
San Antonio	16	9	.640
Memphis	16	9	.640
Dallas	10	15	.400
New Orleans	10	15	.400

Northwest Division			
	W	L	Pct
Seattle	15	8	.652
Minnesota	15	8	.652
Denver	12	11	.522
Portland	10	13	.435

Pacific Division			
	W	L	Pct
Phoenix	15	7	.682
Sacramento	15	7	.682
L.A. Lakers	10	12	.455
L.A. Clippers	11	11	.500
Golden State	11	11	.500

Saturday's games			
Orlando 117, Denver 95	117	95	
Charlotte 110, Houston 107	110	107	
Boston 114, Cleveland 107	114	107	
Portland 75, Detroit 74	75	74	
Orlando 104, Golden State 85	104	85	

Sunday's games			
Orlando 110, New Jersey 99	110	99	
Orlando 110, New Jersey 99	110	99	
New Orleans at Sacramento			
Memphis at L.A. Clippers			

Monday's games			
Utah at Philadelphia			
Toronto at Houston			
Phoenix at Chicago			
Phoenix at Denver			
Memphis at L.A. Lakers			
Washington at Golden State			

Tuesday			
Saturday, 12/18			
Denver	94	94	
San Antonio	104	104	
Orlando	117	117	
Charlotte	110	110	
Boston	114	114	
Portland	75	75	
Orlando	104	104	
Golden State	85	85	

Wednesday			
Sunday, 12/19			
Orlando	117	117	
Charlotte	110	110	
Boston	114	114	
Portland	75	75	
Orlando	104	104	
Golden State	85	85	

Thursday			
Monday, 12/20			
Orlando	117	117	
Charlotte	110	110	
Boston	114	114	
Portland	75	75	
Orlando	104	104	
Golden State	85	85	

Friday			
Tuesday, 12/21			
Orlando	117	117	
Charlotte	110	110	
Boston	114	114	
Portland	75	75	
Orlando	104	104	
Golden State	85	85	

Saturday			
Wednesday, 12/22			
Orlando	117	117	
Charlotte	110	110	
Boston	114	114	
Portland	75	75	
Orlando	104	104	
Golden State	85	85	

Sunday			
Thursday, 12/23			
Orlando	117	117	
Charlotte	110	110	
Boston	114	114	
Portland	75	75	
Orlando	104	104	
Golden State	85	85	

Monday			
Friday, 12/24			
Orlando	117	117	
Charlotte	110	110	
Boston	114	114	
Portland	75	75	
Orlando	104	104	
Golden State	85	85	

Tuesday			
Saturday, 12/25			
Orlando	117	117	
Charlotte	110	110	
Boston	114	114	
Portland	75	75	
Orlando	104	104	
Golden State	85	85	

Wednesday			
Sunday, 12/26			
Orlando	117	117	
Charlotte	110	110	
Boston	114	114	
Portland	75	75	
Orlando	104	104	
Golden State	85	85	

Thursday			
Monday, 12/27			
Orlando	117	117	
Charlotte	110	110	
Boston	114	114	
Portland	75	75	
Orlando	104	104	
Golden State	85	85	

Friday			
Tuesday, 12/28			
Orlando	117	117	
Charlotte	110	110	
Boston	114	114	
Portland	75	75	
Orlando	104	104	
Golden State	85	85	

Saturday			
Wednesday, 12/29			
Orlando	117	117	
Charlotte	110	110	
Boston	114	114	
Portland	75	75	
Orlando	104	104	
Golden State	85	85	

Sunday			
Thursday, 12/30			
Orlando	117	117	
Charlotte	110	110	
Boston	114	114	
Portland	75	75	
Orlando	104	104	
Golden State	85	85	

Monday			
Friday, 12/31			
Orlando	117	117	
Charlotte	110	110	
Boston	114	114	
Portland	75	75	
Orlando	104	104	
Golden State	85	85	

Tuesday			
Saturday, 1/1			
Orlando	117	117	
Charlotte	110	110	
Boston	114	114	
Portland	75	75	
Orlando	104	104	
Golden State	85	85	

Wednesday			
Sunday, 1/2			
Orlando	117	117	
Charlotte	110	110	
Boston	114	114	
Portland	75	75	
Orlando	104	104	
Golden State	85	85	

Thursday			
Monday, 1/3			
Orlando	117	117	
Charlotte	110	110	
Boston	114	114	
Portland	75	75	
Orlando	104	104	
Golden State	85	85	

Friday			
Tuesday, 1/4			
Orlando	117	117	
Charlotte	110	110	
Boston	114	114	
Portland	75	75	
Orlando	104	104	
Golden State	85	85	

Saturday			
Wednesday, 1/5			
Orlando	117	117	
Charlotte	110	110	
Boston	114	114	
Portland	75	75	
Orlando	104	104	
Golden State	85	85	

Sunday			
Thursday, 1/6			
Orlando	117	117	
Charlotte	110	110	
Boston	114	114	
Portland	75	75	
Orlando	104	104	
Golden State	85	85	

Boston coach Rivers. A—18,904 (20,56

Trail Blazers 75, Pistons

PORTLAND, Miles 60 12 13, D

Mavericks' stiff defense too much for Hawks

BY JAIME ARON

The Associated Press

DALLAS — The Dallas Mavericks got instant results from a two-day crash course in defense. Then again, it helped that they were playing the Atlanta Hawks.

The Hawks matched a franchise-low by scoring 28 points in the first half and the Mavericks wound up tying a franchise low for points allowed in a game in a 90-68 victory Saturday night.

"It was what I expected after a couple days of practice," Dallas coach Don Nelson said.

Dirk Nowitzki led Dallas with 15 points and 12 rebounds, despite losing his front teeth. His gritty performance was fitting considering 137 U.S. soldiers wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan sat in front-row seats.

The soldiers from Brooke Army Medical Center near San Antonio were flown in as part of a thank-you campaign thought up by a season-ticket holder, with more than \$150,000 in courtesy seats donated by fellow season-ticket holders. The soldiers — all wearing matching T-shirts and many with their injuries quite apparent — received a standing ovation after the first quarter.



U.S. Army Spc. Jason Baldwin, center, of Rochelle, Ill., who was wounded in action, stands with other military personnel honoring the flag prior to the start of the game between the Dallas Mavericks and the Atlanta Hawks on Saturday night in Dallas. Nearly 140 season-ticket holders donated their front row tickets so the soldiers could enjoy the game. The Mavericks defeated the Hawks 90-68.

Nowitzki was hit in the mouth by teammate Jason Terry and Atlanta's Jason Collier while going for a rebound a few minutes in.

He returned late in the first quarter without the dental bridge that comprises most of his top teeth. He had it put back in at half-time with a cream team employee bought at a drug store during the first half.

"I was lucky enough that my

dentist was actually at the game," Nowitzki said. "He came in and fixed it real quick. I've got to go back and see him [Sunday]."

Nowitzki played 32 minutes, making five of 12 shots and uncharacteristically missing five of 10 foul shots. It hardly mattered, though, because of how poorly the Hawks played.

Atlanta opened with seven straight misses and made just one

of its first 15 shots. The Hawks didn't get a basket from a starter until there was 1:23 left in the first quarter and they finished the period with just 12 points. They had 16 in the second quarter, getting the last two on foul shots with 0.5 seconds left, giving them just 28 at halftime for the fourth time in franchise history.

Their 68 points set a season low for the second time in three

games; they had 69 against Houston on Wednesday. Atlanta shot just 33 percent in losing its fifth straight, keeping the Hawks stuck at four wins, second worst in the NBA.

"The first and second quarters were a disaster offensively," coach Mike Woodson said. "We just couldn't make our shots. We lost our confidence a little bit shooting the ball."

Considering that the Hawks missed layups, dunks and 10 of their first 14 free throws during the slow start, it's hard to credit the Mavericks' defense too much. But Dallas, which had lost its last three at home, was coming off two long practices in which coach Don Nelson tried regaining the defensive intensity his players showed when they started the season 7-1.

"We had to get back to the way we were playing in early November," said Terry, who made his first start with Dallas against his former team. "Now the key is coming back and doing it again."

The Mavericks actually took their time breaking the game open. They led just 27-12 after Atlanta's first-quarter cold snap, but stretched it to a 40-19 halftime and a game-high 32 at the end of the third quarter.

Local scoreboard

Intersevice basketball Osan Pacificwide Open Holiday Tournament

At Osan Fitness and Sports Center,
Osan Air Base, South Korea

Day 2 standings

Osan Air Base, South Korea	2-0
Camp Humphreys, South Korea	1-1
Seoul American High School	1-1
Andersen Air Force Base, Guam	1-1
Osan Air Base, South Korea	0-2
Sunday's games	
Seoul American 68, Suwon 62	
Osan 79, Andersen 60	

Men's Pool B

Kunsan Air Base, South Korea	2-1
Yongsan Garrison, South Korea	2-1
Spotlight, Oklahoma	1-1
Osan American High School 5, Korea	0-2

Sunday's games

Osan American 59, Suwon 59	
Yongsan 70, Spotlight 64	
Kunsan 71, Korea 64	

Women's Pool

Osan Air Base, South Korea	3-0
Kunsan Air Base, South Korea	2-0
Yongsan Garrison, South Korea	2-1
Camp Humphreys, South Korea	2-1
Osan Air Base, South Korea	0-2
Seoul American High School 10, Korea	0-2

Sunday's games

Yongsan 56, Camp Humphreys 50	
Osan 52, Suwon 40	
Yongsan 50, Seoul American 48	
Osan 52, Camp Humphreys 43	
Kunsan 57, Seoul American 53	
Camp Humphreys 75, Suwon 66	

Swimming

2004 Okinawa Dolphins Swim Team
Polar Bear Ocean Race

At Oona War Beach, Camp Schwab,
Okinawa

Sunday's top five finishers
(all distances in meters)

Men-boys 200

Zach Lawhorn, age 16, 2 minutes, 54 seconds; Nicholas Segura, 9, 5:44 (two competitors).

Men-boys 750

Connor Calkins, 12, 13:56; Steve Murphy, 30, 17:20; Douglas Bauer, 21, 24:07; Jeff Quirk, 14, 24:59; Paul Smith, 14, 25:42.

Men-boys 1,500

Matt Kent, 20, 34:31; Sean Wood, 15, 35:48; Scott Wood, 13, 37:54; John Dandy, 14, 31:40.

Women-girls 200

Pauli Cackovic, 8, 5:44; Madison Jones, 8, 6:40; Lisa Reynolds, 8, 6:48; Lisa Wood, 57, 9:48 (four competitors).

Women-girls 750

Hannah Cackovic, 13, 14:51; Tara Banks, 31, 14:53; Paula Smith, 14, 15:03 (three competitors).

Women-girls 1,500

Kelita Hironaka, 21, 26:59; Karen Louann Leong, 26, 28, 29; Lisa Wood, 40, 30:30; Wendy Toun, 34, 32:54 (four competitors).

Seoul boys get breakthrough victory

Falcons are first high school team to defeat post-level club in Osan Pacificwide tournament

BY DAVID ORNAUER

Stars and Stripes

OSAN AIR BASE, South Korea — The Seoul American boys expected to come to the Osan Pacificwide Open Holiday Basketball Tournament to take their lumps and learn valuable lessons about the game, lessons administered by their adult counterparts.

But Falcons coach Steve Boyd and his team instead became the first high school team to beat a post-level squad since the tournament's inception in 1987, routing Korea's Suwon Trail Blazers 68-42.

"I'm very happy with this," said Boyd, acknowledging that the victory came against a Suwon team that was missing three starters. "But that doesn't matter. A win is a win. Any time you can beat a group of adults, that's a feather in your cap."

Largely responsible for the victory was Boyd's use of varying defenses.

After Suwon's Josh Smith hit three quick early first-half baskets, Boyd put senior Phillip Anglade on Smith in a box-and-one, and shut him down the rest of the half.

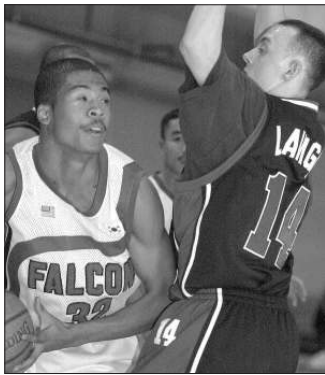
Boyd then unleashed his trademark 1-3-1 "Black Diamond" half-court trap, and the Falcons led by as many as 30 points in the second half.

"They're good for a young team," Smith said. "They have heart."

All-Air Force outfielder plays guard skills for host Osan

For an All-Air Force outfielder, Kazuo "Jo-Jo" Dancer seems to be pretty far at shooting a basketball, too.

Her scoring touch has helped the host Osan Defenders seize the early edge in the women's portion of the tournament, winning each of their first three games.



DAVID ORNAUER/Stars and Stripes

Seoul American forward Justin Lee (32) finds his path to the basket blocked by Suwon defender Joseph Lavigne on Sunday at Osan Air Base, South Korea. The Falcons won 68-42.

represent Air Force blue in both sports.

"I want to. I'd really like to go out, get the opportunity to try out for the Air Force team," Dancer said.

Duty might get in the way, she said, given the high operations tempo at Osan and the large number of Air Force personnel worldwide deployed in support of Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom.

"It's kind of hard to juggle [sports] with work," she said. "We work lots of hours. It's kind of hard to let me go for two different sports, and the mission always comes first."

"I play sports year-round," said the 26-year-old staff sergeant from Salinas, Calif., who's assigned to Osan's 51st Security Forces Squadron. "Basketball and softball pretty much keep me busy here."

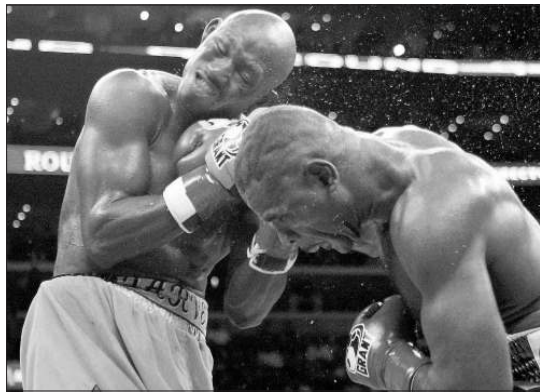
Playing about half of each game, with coach James Wright giving everybody on his roster equal minutes, Dancer averaged 11.5 points per game as Osan downed Seoul American High 65-45 on Saturday and bested Camp Humphreys 52-43 on Sunday. Osan also beat Suwon Air Base by forfeit.

That's a dramatic turnaround from the 1-5 start by Osan in Korea Traveling League play.

Dancer's berth on the All-Air Force softball team came in her first trip to All-Air Force camp last summer at Peterson Air Force Base, Colo. She made the team along with Twyla Sears and Perri-Nicole Nery of Okinawa's Kadet Air Base and Jamie Thompson of Misawa Air Base, Japan.

But Air Force fell short of the gold in the All-Air Forces tournament, also at Peterson. The airman lost the gold medal game 36-24 to Army on Sept. 17.

Wright half-jokingly says playing basketball is a way for her to keep in touch with softball. But Dancer would like to take it a step further, and perhaps



Glen Johnson, right, connects with Antonio Tarver during their light heavyweight bout Saturday night in Los Angeles. Johnson, who beat Roy Jones Jr. three months ago, won the 12-round fight in a split decision.

Split decision goes Johnson's way

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Glen Johnson knows what it's like to put his fate in the hands of boxing judges and have decisions go against him.

So, he was prepared for the worst Saturday night. He got the best.

Johnson, a virtual unknown until knocking out Roy Jones Jr. three months ago, won a split decision over Antonio Tarver in

Sports briefs

a matchup of the world's best light heavyweights.

"My heart was beating real fast," he said with a smile when asked if he was concerned about the outcome. "I came out ahead, which doesn't happen too often. I'm just thankful."

The Staples Center crowd cheered throughout the final round, and when it ended, both fighters thrust their fists into the air, proclaiming victory.

The 35-year-old Johnson raised his record to 42-9-2 with 28 knockouts. He didn't begin to box until he was 20, and turned professional three years later.

Johnson won his first 32 professional fights but was 9-9-2 in his most recent 20 before Saturday night. He thought he won many of those that he lost, but the judges invariably ruled otherwise.

"I fought my best fight, the outcome is what it is," he said.

Judges Melvina Lathan and Chuck Giampa scored the bout 115-113 in favor of Johnson. Judge Marty Denkin had it 116-112 for Tarver. The Associated Press scored it 115-113 for Tarver.

The 6-foot-2½ Tarver, a solid favorite, said he thought he won by dictating the pace and throwing

the harder punches.

"It could have gone either way. I closed strong," Tarver said. Tarver, a southpaw, said he injured his left hand when he hit Johnson in the fourth or fifth round.

"We'll be back," he said. "That's the mark of a champion — if you can come back from defeat. We all know I can. Congratulations to Glen."

Shell interested in Dolphins job

MIAMI — Former Oakland Raiders coach Art Shell is interested in the Miami Dolphins' job, possibly joining LSU coach Nick Saban as a candidate, an NFL source with knowledge of the job search said Saturday.

Shell might receive an interview, the source said on condition of anonymity.

By interviewing Shell, the NFL's senior vice president for football operations, Miami would comply with a league requirement that teams interview a minority candidate for any coaching vacancy.

Shell became the first black coach of the modern era in 1989 with the Raiders, but he hasn't been a head coach since 1994.

Dolphins interim coach Jim Bates is also expected to interview for the job. Preparing his team to play the New England Patriots, Bates said he advised management he wants to wait until after the game to discuss plans for an interview.

"I told them I didn't want anything to distract me from Monday night's game," Bates said.

Saban, the only coach the Dolphins have confirmed is a candidate, said he has had no contact with Miami since interviewing Tuesday with owner Wayne Huizenga and president Eddie Jones in Baton Rouge, La.

In five seasons at Louisiana State, Saban has won two Southeastern Conference titles and the 2003 BCS national championship.

The Dolphins declined to comment Saturday on their search.

Saban has been considered the favorite for the job ever since coach Dave Wannstedt resigned last month after Miami started the season 1-8.

Shell, a Hall of Fame offensive tackle, played for the Oakland-Los Angeles Raiders from 1968-82 and had a 56-41 record coaching the Raiders from 1989-94.

Grandi wins first Cup GS

ALTA BADIA, Italy — Canada's Thomas Grandi won a giant slalom Sunday for his first World Cup victory in his 12 seasons on the circuit.

Bode Miller missed a gate and did not finish his second run, reducing the American's lead in the overall standings. Winner of six of 13 races this season, Miller still holds a 798-479 points lead on Maier.

Miller said he skied over a rock during his first run and was in 20th place, perhaps causing him to be too aggressive in the second run.

With the temperature at 9 degrees and the wind chill at 10 below zero, four fans occupied special on-field seats. They sat 10 yards off the 15-yard line in the southeast corner of the stadium Sunday as the Bears took on the Houston Texans.

The seats are part of an NFL pilot program to test the possibility of adding these seats permanently to stadiums chosen at random at a US Association Banquet last week.

The four at the game were enclosed in a cube and included a pair of TVs and blankets. Three of the seats were heated.

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Gonzaga regains its swagger with upset of Ga. Tech

The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — The Gonzaga Bulldogs showed they belonged on the floor with a top-5 team. That wasn't the case earlier in this young season.

Adam Morrison scored 24 points to lift No. 22 Gonzaga to an 85-73 victory Saturday night over No. 3 Georgia Tech in the Las Vegas Showdown.

In the opener of the double-header, No. 4 Oklahoma State beat UNLV 79-67.

Derek Raitivo tied a career high with 21 points on 11-of-18 shooting for Gonzaga (8-1), which earned its biggest victory since beating No. 3 Missouri on Dec. 13, 2003.

During Thanksgiving weekend, Gonzaga faced No. 1 Illinois and was beaten by 17 points in the Wooden Tradition in Indianapolis.

The Bulldogs have turned things around in a hurry.

"We looked like a JV team against Illinois," Gonzaga coach Mark Few said. "So our approach for this game was different. I'm proud of how we came out and played tough. You have to play tough against the great teams and that is what we did."

Will Bynum scored a career-high 28 points, going 9-for-16 from the field and 7-for-8 from the free throw line. But it wasn't enough for the fellow Bulldogs (7-1), who lost for the first time since falling to Connecticut in last season's NCAA tournament championship game.

Gonzaga led 45-41 at halftime and then held Georgia Tech scoreless for the first 4:46 of the second half. The Bulldogs twice led by 15 points.

The Yellow Jackets closed to 75-70 with 3:28 left, but Gonzaga pulled away late.

"We didn't attack their zone well," Gonzaga coach Paul Hewitt said. "Defensively, we didn't play as well as we are capable of. They had too many chances to drive down the middle of the floor."

Ronny Turiaf had 17 points and 10 rebounds for Gonzaga and Sean Mallon added 11 points.

B.J. Elder scored 16 points and Jarrett Jack added 15 for Georgia Tech. The Yellow Jackets' reserves outscored Gonzaga's bench players 30-4.

Georgia Tech's tempo was a late start time. The tip was after midnight EST, the time zone the Yellow Jackets are used to and traveled from.

In all fairness to them, this was a hard game," Few said. "It was a 12:30 a.m. start and they had to come across the country."

Gonzaga led 14-8 before Georgia Tech went on a 22-9 run to build its largest lead of the game, 30-23 with 8:41 left in the first half. Gonzaga refused to fold, re-



Oklahoma State's John Lucas drives for the basket against UNLV guard Jerel Blasingame.

spending with a 9-0 run of its own on the way to taking charge of the game.

No. 4 Oklahoma St. 79, UNLV 67: By halftime, Oklahoma State had shaken off the rust from a week-long break for exams. The Cowboys went on a 15-point run to erase an early four-point deficit.

Joey Graham had 20 points and John Lucas added 17 for the Cowboys (8-0) as the Final Four team from a year ago remained undefeated.

"We are better than last year's team," said Graham, who led Oklahoma State with seven rebounds. "We have added so many assets."

UNLV, down by as many as 16 points, had the deficit to 71-63 with 1:47 to play thanks to five straight points from Romel Beck.

Seconds later, however, Ivan McFarlin's dunk capped a perfectly executed fast break in helping the Cowboys close the game on an 8-4 run.

"We quit sharing the ball. That is not what this game is about," Graham said about letting UNLV back in the game.

McFarlin also had 17 points for the Cowboys, who forced 21 turnovers and held UNLV to 40 percent shooting in their first action since beating Alabama-Birmingham 86-73 eight days earlier.

Beck had 25 points for UNLV (3-4) and Jerel Blasingame added 19 and nine assists.

Graham and McFarlin had seven rebounds apiece as the Cowboys held a 38-33 advantage on the boards.

"We didn't back away in the second half," UNLV coach Lon Kruger said. "We found out that we have to be more physical."

"Oklahoma State is very strong and quick, and we didn't overcome that."

Anderson looks sharp as UConn gets a nice

The Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. — Rashad Anderson scored 27 points and went 7-for-8 from the free throw line over the final 2 minutes as Connecticut beat Rice 81-72 on Sunday.

Josh Boone added 20 points and dominated inside with 14 rebounds for the 11th-ranked Huskies (5-1), who were coming off their first loss — a 61-59 upset at Massachusetts 10 days ago.

Connecticut shot just 38 percent from the field, but Boone anchored a front-court that outbounded the Owls 61-34 and the Huskies' 31 offensive rebounds led to 24 second-chance points.

Michael Harris led Rice (5-2) with 22 points and nine rebounds.

No. 5 North Carolina 85, Virginia Tech 51: At Blacksburg, Va., Javard Williams and Sean May scored 17 points each as North Carolina (8-1) gave Virginia Tech (5-3) a rough welcome to Atlantic Coast Conference basketball. The Tar Heels, who have won eight straight since a season-opening loss to Santa Clara, scored 17 of the last 21 points to lead 41-27 at halftime, then started the second half with a 16-5 run.

Raymond Felton added 15 points and Marvin Williams 12 for North Carolina, which emptied the bench in the second half, using 14 players.

In Saturday's games:

No. 2 Kansas 64, South Carolina 60: At Lawrence, Kan., Russell Robinson scored four points in the first 36 seconds as Kansas won a game after trailing most of the way. South Carolina (5-2), a 1-point underdog in its first road game, came out with a full-court pressure defense and seized an 11-0 lead over the three-fingered Jayhawks.

Kansas (7-0) committed five turnovers and had a shot blocked in its first six possessions and didn't get its first lead until Keith Langford's Christian Moody inside to make it 54-52 with 5:03 to go.

Wayne Simien had 20 points and 11 rebounds for Kansas, despite leaving the game for about 5 minutes in the second half after in-

juring his right thumb. He returned with the thumb heavily taped.

No. 7 Duke 78, Oklahoma 67: At New York, J.J. Redick had 19 of his 26 points in the second half and Daniel Ewing had 12 of his 17 after halftime, leading Duke's comeback.

The Blue Devils, who trailed 39-23 at halftime, are 8-0 for the fourth time in five seasons.

Taj Gray had 18 points and 12 rebounds for the Sooners (6-2), whose only other loss was to No. 18 Washington in the semifinals of the Great Alaska Shootout.

No. 8 Syracuse 74, Drexel 54: At Syracuse, N.Y., Hakim Warrick scored 21 points and Darryl Watkins had 14 points and 13 rebounds for Syracuse (9-1). The Orange won their second straight after a loss to No. 4 Oklahoma State and did it by dominating the boards against Drexel (3-4).

No. 10 Pittsburgh 73, Coppin St. 42: At Pittsburgh, Chris Taft scored 18 points and grabbed 11 rebounds for Pittsburgh (8-0). Carl Krauser added 17 points for the Panthers.

No. 16 Iowa 88, W. Carolina 75: At Iowa City, Iowa, Jeff Hornor scored 17 of his 20 points in the second half, almost single-handedly breaking open what had been a tight game.

Iowa (9-1) led by only seven after a sloppy first half, and Western Carolina (5-7) hung around for a while in the second half before Hornor took over.

No. 17 Alabama 87, Tennessee 52: At Tuscaloosa, Ala., Chuck Davis scored 24 points, grabbed 12 rebounds and blocked seven shots to lead Alabama.

Alabama (9-1) never trailed in the game and led by as many as 25 points in the second half before Tennessee State rallied late, mostly against reserves.

Kennedy Winston scored 19 points for Alabama, while Earnest Shelton had 15.

No. 20 Mississippi St. 80, Xavier 74: At Cincinnati, Winsome Frazier emerged from a deep shooting slump by scoring 20 points and No. 20 Mississippi State kept its road streak going by beating Xavier.



Connecticut's Rudy Gay blocks a shot by Rice's Patrick Britton in Sunday's game at Hartford, Conn. Connecticut won 81-72.

The Bulldogs (9-2) won their 14th straight road game, the longest current streak in Division I. Xavier (2-4) has lost three consecutive home games.

No. 21 Michigan St. 63, Delaware St. 45: At East Lansing, Mich., Chris Hill had 14 points, including four three-pointers, Kelvin Torbert added 12 points and Shannon Brown had 10 for the Spartans (6-2).

No. 25 Cincinnati 81, Northwestern St. 65: At Cincinnati, Jason Maxwell scored 21 points, including 14 in the second half, to lead Cincinnati (7-0). It was coach Bob Huggins' 500th game at Cincinnati, where he is 381-119.

ESPN says Majerus walks out on USC

BY BETH HARRIS

The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Three days after being hired as the new basketball coach at Southern California, Rick Majerus backed out of the deal and will stay at ESPN as a college basketball analyst.

"Rick expressed to us that he had a change of heart and wondered if the possibility still existed for him to work for ESPN, and it does. We told him we could," ESPN spokesman Josh Krulewitz said Saturday night.

Majerus, who cited health reasons when he retired in January after 15 seasons as Utah's coach, was announced as the Trojans' incoming coach last Wednesday. He was to assume the post on April 1.

Majerus did not immediately return phone messages Saturday night.

"We plan to meet with Rick on Monday. Until then, there's really nothing we can say," USC athletic director Mike Garrett said in a statement.

USC spokesman Tim Tessalone said the meeting had already been planned.

Until taking over in April, Majerus was supposed to be on the basketball staff and work on recruiting, filling the assistant's job vacated when Jim Saia was promoted to interim coach after Henry Bibby's firing.

During a campus news conference following his hiring, the 56-year-old Majerus said he wasn't worried about his health.

"My health is good or I wouldn't do this," he said. "Both my doctors encouraged me to do it. I wouldn't put anyone, least of all myself, in harm's way."

Saia last saw Majerus over dinner Wednesday night, when they discussed the program's future. Majerus had soup and salad for dinner and kept apples in his hotel room, Saia said.

"He asked a lot of questions about the staff and players coming back. He just wanted to get a feel from me," Saia told The Associated Press on Saturday night, his voice still hoarse from USC's victory over Western Michigan earlier in the day.

Something apparently changed overnight Wednesday.

Majerus canceled a Thursday morning meeting with assistant coach Bob Cantu, then canceled dinner that night with assistant Eric Brown, Saia said. On Friday, Majerus canceled a meeting with the players who would still be eligible next season. He talked to the team briefly Wednesday after being introduced as the new coach.

Saia said there were no reasons given for the assorted cancellations.

He left a message on my cell Friday night saying he wanted to go back to Milwaukee and spend the holidays with his family and mother," Saia said. "He said he'd see me after Christmas."

The Trojans leave for Hawaii on Sunday to play in the Rainbow Classic. They are 2-1 since Saia took over.

"I'll be team to get away and bond as a group," he said. "I'm an interim coach that maybe has a chance to coach next season. I'd love to stay at USC."

Saia said he's not concerned about the future.

"I can't control what is going to happen," he said. "You could go crazy trying to figure it all out."

UCLA coach Ben Howland was stunned when informed of Majerus' reversal after the Bruins beat Michigan.

"You're kidding me, right?" Howland said. "I hope and will pray it's not over health issues because that was always the biggest concern. That's surprising to me because I know from listening to him how excited he was to come back."

Majerus coached Utah to the national championship game in 1998, losing to Kentucky, one of the school's 10 NCAA tournament appearances during his tenure. His other college stints were at Ball State and Marquette. He was also an assistant with the NBA's Milwaukee Bucks.

Notre Dame overwhelms Army after a slow start

The Associated Press

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — Colin Falls scored 16 points and Dennis Latimore 15 and Notre Dame beat Army 71-52 Sunday after spotting the Black Knights a 16-point lead.

Army (2-7) led 21-5 after making eight of first 10 shots while Notre Dame (5-2) missed 12 of 14. Army shot just 36 percent thereafter while the Irish improved to 45 percent and outbounded Army 47-28.

The Irish finished the first half on a 25-9 spurt and opened the second half with an 18-4 run to put the game away.

Latimore, who played just eight minutes and scored just two points on 1-for-3 shooting in the first half, made all five of his shots in the second half.

Jordan Cornette had 13 points and seven rebounds and Chris Thomas 12 points and seven assists. Colin Harris led Army with 10 points, Travis Owsley scored eight and Jimmy Sewell had seven points and six rebounds.

Despite a big size advantage, Notre Dame only outscored Army 22-20 inside. But the Irish forced 19 turnovers, leading to 22 Irish points compared to 10 for the Irish.

Army was unstopable at the start of the game. The Black Knights scored at will, with 6-foot Matt Bell dribbling across the middle of the paint and shooting over the bigger Irish for easy baskets. They also hit from outside, with Sewell, who is 6-11, hitting a three-pointer.

Army used a 14-1 run to take a 21-5 lead when Sewell scored inside eight minutes into the game. The Cadets extended the lead to 16 points again when Bell made two free throws with 10:12 left in the half to make it 23-7.

The Irish scrambled back to a 30-30 halftime tie with Chris Quinn's three-pointer three seconds before intermission drawing Notre Dame even.

Georgetown 75, Navy 69: At Annapolis, Md., Mike Spadafora scored a career-high 26 points to lead Division III Georgetown past Navy on Saturday.

Navy (3-6) led 52-37 with 11 minutes to play but Georgetown (3-4) went on a 17-0 run to take the lead on the way to snapping an 11-game losing streak against the Midgies dating to 1993.

The score was 63-35 with 2:35 to play when Spadafora put the Bullets ahead to stay with a free throw. Spadafora, a transfer from Duquesne, scored 12 of his team's last 14 points including four straight free throws to ice it.

The Midgies also committed 25 turnovers.

Leanne Mergerson led Navy with 16 points and Corey Johnson added 12 points and nine rebounds.

SPORTS



Raptors get first win since trading Carter to Nets, Page 28

Weathering through



San Diego Chargers' LaDainian Tomlinson runs for 20 yards against Cleveland Browns defender Lewis Sanders, left, in the first quarter Sunday in Cleveland. Trailing the play is Chargers' Kassim Osgood (81). Tomlinson rushed for 111 yards and two touchdowns as the Chargers won 21-0.

Chargers stop Browns cold, clinch AFC West with shutout

BY TOM WITHERS
The Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Those lightning-bolt decals streaking across their helmets have never been more fitting. The San Diego Chargers have shocked the NFL — and maybe even themselves.

LaDainian Tomlinson rushed for 111 yards and two touchdowns, Antonio Gates tied a league record with his 12th TD and San Diego captured the AFC West title Sunday, sliding through the snow for a 21-0 win over the Cleveland Browns.

One season after a

league-worst 4-12 mark, the Chargers (11-3) won their eighth straight and earned their first postseason berth since 1995 when Denver lost at Kansas City. They're division champions for the first time since 1994.

"I've only been here for four years, but in some ways it feels like eight," Tomlinson said. "To go from where we were to this is awesome. I've dreamed of the playoffs for a long time, but it's only been a dream."

Reality set in quickly. As the Chargers walked off the frozen field, each player was handed an "AFC West 2004 Champions"

baseball cap.

"This feels great," said quarterback Drew Brees, who attempted just six passes. "It's been a long road for San Diego fans and us. It feels great because we weren't expected to do too much this year. Instead of 11-3, a lot of people thought we'd be 3-11."

With a mistake-free offense and hard-nosed defense, coach Marty Schottenheimer has led the Chargers to their longest win streak since 1987 and turned them into the league's most unlikely success story.

"We're riding the wave," fullback Lorenzo Neal said.

San Diego, which hasn't lost

since Oct. 17, also showed it can be a factor in the postseason regardless of climate. The Chargers ignored the blowing snow, a game-time temperature of 18 and a subzero wind chill to post their first shutout since 1993 and easily handle the Browns (3-11), who lost their eighth straight.

After winning on the frozen shores of Lake Erie, the Chargers should be prepared to play in frigid New England or Pittsburgh in the playoffs.

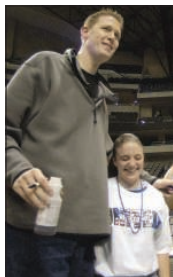
"Our confidence is just snowballing with each performance," Gates said.

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A's 'Big Three' down to 1; Mulder goes to Cards

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Wounded troops get up close, personal with Mavs

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Gonzaga still has some zip, upsets No. 3 Georgia Tech

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